

Gandhi Memorial College of Education Bantlab Jammu

CONTEMPORARY KASHMIR POLITICS

Some Insights

Based On Reshi Dev's Political Diary



translation and annotation by

KASHINATH PANDIT

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If politics is the game of scoundrels, democracy is the game of numbers that are only counted but not weighed. It is more ludicrous when left to untutored masses that can be either reckless or irresponsible in their national consciousness. That, by and large, is truth about the depressing story of contemporary Kashmir politics.

We do find politicians here and there who pen down their political diaries. But in the first place these diaries are rarely published. And if published, the authors glibly hide the truth from the reader. Secondly, if some facts trickle down, these are craftily presented to suit their party line.

Rarely do we find an honest and dedicated political activist who, rising as he does from grassroots level, taking active part in the politics of his days, moving in utter disappointment from post to post in search of light that could banish darkness and ignorance, and then putting down his variegated but sordid experience in black and white. Such a reading is always unusual and rather bizarre because the unsuspecting public is happy with understatements and half-truths paraded as gospel truth.

The uniqueness of this work lies in its author recounting many small and not too momentous events happening on strictly local political plane of contemporary Kashmir. But taking them as indicator of the move of J&K political heavy weights on the

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Rs.400

Gandhi Memorial College of Education Bantalab Jammu

With best Compliments

to Mr. P. K. Dhar

from
A. M. Zulfikar

Thanks for
the gift.
A. M. Zulfikar

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by
Kashinath Pandit

G.M. College of Education
Raipur, Bantalab
Jammu.

Acc. No... 2730(B)

Dated... 4/11/2015

ASIAN-EURASIAN HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM

New Delhi
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First Published 2008

Price: Rs. 400.00

Published by Eurasian Human Rights Forum, E-241, Sarita Vihar,
New Delhi – 110 076 (INDIA).

website: www.world-citizenship.org

Printed at D.K. Fine Arts Press, Delhi – 110 052

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Acknowledgement

Publishers are profoundly thankful to Fremont (California) based India Education and Relief Fund for providing financial assistance towards the printing and publication of the English version of Reshi Dev's political diary *Zakhmun ki Zabani* under the title *Contemporary Kashmir Politics: Some Insights*. The Forum is thankful to him for permitting us to translate and annotate the English text.

We express our thanks to Dr. Kashinath Pandit for voluntarily doing the translation and adding annotations to it.

We thank Jammu-based *Kashmir Sentinel* for permitting us to draw references from its archives, and also for providing us some valuable and relevant documentary material, which has gone as appendices to this volume.

Asian -Eurasian Human Rights Forum

Translator's Note

Reshi Dev's life and activities are intertwined with contemporary history and politics of Kashmir. His sensitivity prompted him to react to major social and political happenings during the tumultuous period that fills his life span, viz. the 20th century. The rise of Soviet State in 1917, India's long freedom struggle, World War II, freedom and the partition of the country, Kashmir political scenario on the eve of partition, external incursion in October 1947, Kashmir issue at the UN, cold war era, Indo-Pak wars, Iran's Islamic Revolution 1979, collapse of the Soviet Union 1991, and now Iraq and Afghan wars are major events on regional and international plane. These happened during his life time.

On Kashmir plane, there was still more to come like the beginning of anti-monarchy movement in early thirties, 1938 spilt in Muslim Conference, emergence of Sheikh Abdullah and the dominance of National Conference, the Naya Kashmir agenda, awakening among Kashmir peasantry, the 'Quit Kashmir Movement' of 1946, the end of Dogra rule and the question of accession of the State, 1947 Pakistan sponsored incursion by Frontier tribesmen, Kashmir question at the UN, the dilemma of the Sheikh and the NC, great betrayal of the principles of Naya Kashmir, and finally the foreign-sponsored armed separatist uprising of 1990 in Kashmir and its far-reaching consequences.

These events happening within the span of a century are, by no means, ordinary for a country or a region. Their impact is much deeper and wider than one may imagine. Reshi Dev

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has seen and gone through all this cataclysmic period. Naturally, he is a part of our contemporary history because he has been reacting to what was happening around him.

Initially attracted to the ideology of a well-known social reformist movement of Arya Samaj, Reshi Dev formulated some values and perceptions to which he stuck. During his life and career he opened many fronts including some against his own community. They treated him like an outcast. He could not accept entrenched Muslim prejudice and hatred against the Hindu minority, and he became a pariah for pseudo-secularists and pseudo-nationalists in various political parties of Kashmir. He refused to be a party to fraud and calumny that contaminated the emergency rule of National Conference following the induction of the Sheikh's "populist" regime in November 1947. Eventually he became *persona non grata* for National Conference, the political party he once chose to serve with sincere commitment.

What attracted him to National Conference was its ideological commonality with the principles for which the Indian National Congress also stood — democracy, secularism and egalitarianism. *Naya Kashmir*, the much talked about manifesto of National Conference setting forth new political, economic and social parameters of the Kashmirian society under the populist rule was a drug that intoxicated him and many other Kashmiri Pandits in National Conference. Like his other comrades, he swore by *Naya Kashmir* and he nursed the dream of a prosperous Kashmir based on equality and non-discrimination in terms of faith, language, caste, colour or ethnicity. No wonder, therefore, that he suffered the greatest shock of his life when, after having given his best to the party and to the Kashmiri people, he, at the end of the day, found the founders of *Naya Kashmir* consigning it to cold storage. He suspected, and very rightly, so the long term intentions and motives of NC leadership.

After implementing land reforms and debt cancellation agenda quite hastily — and perhaps not to the entire liking of New Delhi leaders — the Sheikh found it expedient to go

slow and finally abandon other major programmes of Naya Kashmir.¹ He had gone through a big change after he met secretly with Adlai Stevenson, the American Presidential candidate in 1952 then on a visit to Srinagar. Many writers think that he nursed the dream of independent Sultanate of Kashmir.

Realizing the importance of peasantry in the new situation which was developing, the Sheikh made sure that he held it firmly in his grip.

In early thirties and forties of the 20th century the ideology of socialism influenced the minds of many intellectuals in the colonized parts of the world. This included a large segment of Indian leadership with Nehru in the forefront. His lieutenant Dr. Kunward Muhammad Ashraf, the incharge of the Congress's Muslim Mass Contact Programme with office in Anand Bhavan, was in charge of socialist thrust in Kashmir. He found a section of National Conference cooperative to his agenda. Thus within the fold of National Conference, the leftist group gradually consolidated its position and influence. It had the backing of the CPI and at times that of Nehru in person. This was a committed group in the NC, and did some ground work to win over Kashmir peasantry. It was on their behest that the symbol of white plough on red background became the formal party flag of NC. The progressive wing of NC recruited dedicated activists to its rank and file, and Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq, a young and intelligent lawyer by profession and a senior leader of NC became its chief. The Sheikh did not interfere with his or his group's work as long as the young activists contributed to the consolidation of NC movement and did not challenge his leadership.

¹Some observers say that since 85 per cent of *jagirdars* (big land holders) in the valley were Hindus, the Sheikh found no compulsion to continue with other popular reforms enunciated in Naya Kashmir Manifesto after the historic tasks of land reforms and putting an end to *jagirdari* system were completed.

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Feeling that the leftist cooperation would help NC in making the anti-monarchy movement broad-based, and bring it into limelight on regional level, Reshi Dev felt inclined to work in wider space and with an urge for creativity. He joined it, and soon developed contact and understanding with its ideologues. He was impressed by their socialist ideology, especially by their avowed sympathy for the poor and resource-less peasantry. The party gave him his due albeit grudgingly — as he felt later on — and he, in turn, opened its rural units at various places in Anantnag district. Struck by its ideological reach, Reshi Dev travelled to Jammu and met with the well-known leftist ideologue and Bhagat Singh's colleague, Dhanawantri. Later on their relations deepened and he was introduced to wider sections of Indian Left. This brought him into contact with well-known comrades of his days. He received training in contemporary politics and sociology, history and geo-strategies. He began looking at Kashmir from a leftist point of view, which, at times, overlooked harsh ground realities and the diversity in Kashmirian society. That is how they were trained in the school of social thought.

He had already been disillusioned with National Conference when its stalwarts shelved the Naya Kashmir programme, made a U-turn and succumbed to communal politics. He suspected that they had abandoned the earlier vision of true secularism. Now he began observing the Leftists from very close quarters, meaning outside the ideological frame and on the basis of ground realities. To his great dismay he found many of them ambivalent in their conviction and commitment. This posed a challenge to his self-created value system and his conscience groaned under its weight. He found that those who called themselves communists and professed to be above communal proclivities were, in reality, wearing a mask. When they took off the mask their real face was something different. He cites instances that forced him to re-think his relations with the

Leftists. In particular, the response he got from Harkishen Singh Surjeet, the then Secretary General of Communist Party of India (M) to whom he reported on the rise of armed insurgency in Kashmir in 1990, and the exodus of the Hindu minority, gave him a shock of his life. He decided to distance himself from them.

Reshi Dev welcomed the split in Bakhshi-led National Conference resulting in the formation of Democratic National Conference (DNC) to which the "progressive" elements of NC had flocked. He responded enthusiastically to a call from its leadership and thought that he had, at the end of the day, found the proper political platform from which he could give vent to his ideas, experience and observations. He served the party with all sincerity and dedication, widening its base in his home constituencies. This was the time when he came into close contact with Sadiq and Mir Qasim. It seemed that his contribution would, ultimately be given due recognition and he would be treated with all the admiration and respect he deserved.

But alas, one fine morning he heard the news that DNC had disbanded their group and rejoined National Conference. He was furious because it shattered his dream. What face was he going to show to his supporters who he had weaned away from Bakhshi's faction and admitted to the new political party with great effort? He met with the ex-DNC leadership, argued with them, quarreled with them and parted ways with them. There were many others who had adopted the same path. Thereafter Reshi Dev did not find it advisable to be an active member of any party though at personal level he continued to lend whatever support he could to the needy persons by recommending them to proper quarters. In political cliché he had been rested but in reality he was betrayed.

Reshi Dev gives deep insight into the duplicity and fraud that ruled the roost in Kashmir political establishment. He spares none because he knows them well, has seen them in

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their true colours and has interacted with them. The conclusion he has drawn from his 70 - year long association with Kashmir politics and political leadership of various hues is what is concisely said in the axiom "by and large the people get the government they deserve"

Then there happened in Kashmir the crisis of 1990. Reshi Dev, like other 300,000 Kashmir Pandits, was forced to leave his home and hearth. He asks why the armed gangsters brutally butchered scores of Pandits he knew closely as a political activist. He gives us the sordid story of this phenomenon and the shameful role of those who were at the helm of affairs. He closely watched how Kashmir leaders driven by self-aggrandizement, were manipulating crisis in subtle communal manner. Let us deal with this in some detail.

The events of 1990, and what unfolded thereafter, are no less than a tragedy for anybody who honestly loves Kashmir. These were doubly painful to men like Reshi Dev who had dedicated their lives to the vision of a prosperous and peaceful Kashmir. A man of deep secularist conviction, Reshi Dev, like many others in and outside Kashmir political arena, became a witness to the collapse of the ideological edifice of Kashmir secularism, which people like him had tried to build and preserve after stupendous efforts spread over many decades. He was face to face with a trauma. Therefore it is pertinent that we briefly speak of this cataclysm and its impact on our civil society.

The rise of anti-India and anti-Hindu armed insurgency in Kashmir in 1990 was not a sudden outburst. It sprang from discontent that was simmering for many years. Its symptoms were discernible as early as 1960s when a militant outfit named Al-Fatah (*Al-Fath*) took up arms to accomplish the mission of secession of Kashmir from the Indian Union and its accession to Pakistan. Its activists wanted to re-enact the struggle of the Palestinians whose lands are under Israeli occupation. In other words, they contended that since Kashmir, too, was an "occupied land", they had the right and

motivation to initiate a struggle for its liberation. They reinforced this conviction by taking recourse to religious injunctions.

By and large, Al-Fatah insurgency (1965-1971) in Kashmir met with failure because of various reasons like lack of quick communication system with their Pakistani sponsors or a limited network and absence of necessary logistical support. Nevertheless, the uprising, even if conducted underground, did make an impact on Kashmiri youth. A number of Kashmiri Muslim organisations under one name or the other surfaced in the length and breadth of the valley, each carrying the covert mission of alienating people from India in order to whip up secessionist sentiment among the broad masses of Kashmiri Muslims. Whatever the stated mission, these organizations covertly carried forward the agenda of propagating the right of the "subjugated" people to a struggle for their independence and self-determination. The slogan of the right of self-determination became the war cry of Kashmir separatists and dissidents.

Reverting to 1953, it will be noted that subsequent to the dismissal and internment of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, his lieutenant Mirza Afzal Baig floated Plebiscite Front, which became the main political organization demanding implementation of the UN Resolutions on Kashmir stipulating plebiscite as solution of Kashmir tangle. Under the iron hand of Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad, who had replaced the Sheikh on August 9, 1953, Plebiscite Front activists were meted out a harsh treatment. Bakhshi was not a leader to tolerate political opposition and thus came down with a heavy hand on the activists of the Front. He knew their team leaders very well because after all they were the former workers of National Conference groomed by the Bakhshi himself as their earlier avatar. Many of them were given government jobs but the diehard among them mostly went underground. Sadiq, who succeeded Bakhshi, adopted a somewhat lenient policy towards the Plebiscite Front in the

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hope of persuading them to weigh the pros and cons of their confrontation with the government and the ruling majority. But the Plebiscite Front activists mistook Sadiq's moderate policy as a sign of his weakness. They felt emboldened to carry on with their subversive activities so much so that they even made an abortive attempt on the life of Sadiq during his address to a public rally in Baramulla in 1964. Police investigations of the incident revealed the alarming network of Al-Fatah armed movement whose ranks were filled by most of the Plebiscite Front activists.

During the government of Mir Qasim, who had succeeded Sadiq, the J&K government changed its stance on the handling of secessionist elements including those advocating armed insurgency. This marked the beginning of the rising crescendo of secession making a dent into the state government structures. The story of Mir Qasim's handling of separatists, armed or unarmed, is not publicly known, but the fact remains that Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, was unhappy with Mir Qasim and it had led to their estrangement. Nobody knows whether Indira Gandhi reacted to secret reports from the intelligence agencies in this matter.

In 1970s, when the Sheikh was still under detention, his son Farooq, then whiling away time in London, had come into contact with the strong PoK Diaspora in UK, led by Amanullah Khan. Hailing from Astor in Baltistan, Amanullah Khan had migrated to UK and settled down in Luton. He and his UK-based compatriots had floated Kashmir Liberation Front (KLF), an organization with the prime objective of seeking secession of Kashmir from the Indian Union. The role of PoK Diaspora in UK in fomenting armed insurgency in Kashmir is very significant. One can find access to its details in Hashim Qurehi's work *Unveiling of the Truth*.

The story of a large number of youth who migrated from Pakistan occupied Kashmir to UK begins with the end of the World War II and continues till present day. During the World War II, these people used to work as stokers on the British

merchant navy. When war came to an end, the British needed vast manpower to run their factories and industrial units. The stokers were given an option to settle down permanently in UK and work in the revival of British industries. As a result, most of the industrial towns of UK like Birmingham, Manchester, and Luton etc. witnessed a concentration of this Diaspora. With their hard work, a phenomenon to which they are used, and with the passage of time, their economic condition improved considerably, and so did their numerical strength in these localities. The British democratic system allowed them the right of franchise and soon they began to understand that they wielded some political clout in their respective constituencies. Political rights and benefits, which the British political system provides were not to be found in their homeland. PoK émigrés as well as Pakistani ruling circles began to realise the utility of the role of this segment of PoK population in UK in the context of their coveting of Kashmir.

PoK émigrés had a number of complaints against Islamabad regimes. Their enormous annual foreign remittances to the tune of over a billion dollars considerably strengthened Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves. However, this money was generally spent on developmental projects in Punjab and not in PoK, which remained backward and devoid of necessary infrastructure. Even health and education services were faced with stagnation. People in PoK demanded royalty for Mangla Dam, which was built on their land and with their water. The worst was that electric power generated from the dam was supplied to Punjab and parts of Sindh while rural PoK including villages adjoining the dam had to go without it. Electric and electronic gadgets, which the émigrés brought home for the convenience of their folks, could not be operated owing to non-availability of electricity. PoK citizens were almost discriminated against and often looked upon with suspicion. Lack of employment opportunities had forced a large number of young people of

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PoK to become labourers and daily wagers in various towns of the Punjab. Before appointment to any government post, a citizen of PoK was required to take an oath of allegiance to Kashmir's accession to Pakistan.

Discontent among the PoK émigrés was increasing day after day. They often brought out protest rallies against discriminatory policy of Pakistan's Punjabi dominated bureaucracy. They were reeling under the domination of a military dictator in Islamabad. Pakistani authorities were not insensitive to political implications of their discontent. The 'Northern Areas', arbitrarily carved out of Pakistan occupied Kashmir and integrated into Pakistan was a big irritant in smooth relations between Islamabad and the people living in Gilgit and Baltistan regions. Above all, denial of true democratic system and devolution of political power and authority to the local people in PoK and NA stimulated the rise of anti-Pakistan sentiment among the people. The situation became more complicated when the High Court of "Azad Kashmir" in a landmark decision declared that Gilgit and Baltistan were part of the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

At this point of time Pakistani intelligence agency, namely ISI, very deftly played religious card, which not only diluted anti-Pakistan sentiment but also created anti-India armed movement to destabilise the State of Jammu and Kashmir and disrupt peace and status quo in the region.

Unfortunately, the PoK émigrés in UK (other than those hailing from Gilgit and Baltistan) were taken in by ISI's calumny. They agreed to become accomplices in merciless butchery in Kashmir in the name of religion and freedom struggle. At the same time, though known for their secularist bent of mind, they succumbed to Islamic radical indoctrination vigorously carried out by the fanatical Pakistani clerics in the mosques in UK. They were subjected to intense anti-India indoctrination like, "Hindu India committed untold atrocities on Kashmiri Muslims, destroyed their mosques and shrines, disallowed them to observe Islamic practices of five-

time prayers, fasting etc. and forbade studying Islamic history and civilization." They were told that only an armed insurgency sponsored, supported and abetted by them in the valley would effectively throw out the Indians from Kashmir. They were told that once the Indians had been ousted militarily, the whole of original State of Jammu and Kashmir would fall in their hands and they would become masters of independent Kashmir. This bait was strong enough to whet the appetite of the expatriates. They dreamed of wielding political power in the original State of Jammu and Kashmir and investing their large remittances there to build for themselves palaces in the Paradise on Earth and live a life of luxury. Thus began deep and regular consultations between PoK-based KLF leaders and the Pakistani ISI sleuths over the ways and means of destabilizing Kashmir

In order to send a message of its ability to strike at India's vital interests, KLF planned the assassination of Indian High Commission senior official, Ravinder Mhatre (somewhere in the outskirts of Luton) in 1984. The British police arrested the suspected assailant, and its investigating teams found a link between Mhatre's assassination and KLF's links with the ISI. New Delhi quickly reacted by sending the founding father of KLF namely Maqbul Butt to the gallows in Tihar jail.

The execution of Maqbul Butt became catalyst to the success of ISI's design of making PoK Diaspora a cat's paw in Kashmir insurgency. Butt was actively involved in carrying out armed attacks and subversion in Kashmir. He was responsible for the murder of Amar Chand of Nadihal in Baramulla district, a CID Inspector who was trying to track him down in Handwara-Kupwara range. Butt had also murdered a J&K Bank official at Langate while Committing a bank dacoity. The court had passed death sentence against him and he was languishing in Tihar Jail in Delhi awaiting the decision of his mercy appeal he had made to the President of India. Butt was alleged to have committed crimes in the valley and then crossed over the LoC to avoid arrest; the

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police had registered a criminal case against him. In due course of time he had become popular with the PoK youth who hailed him as the liberator of Kashmir. He had many followers among the PoK Diaspora in UK. ISI managed to rake up fraternal sentiments of PoK émigrés and goaded them into seeking revenge of Butts execution. Thus fundamentalist indoctrination, whetting of pro-Butt sentiments and promises of winning the paradise of Kashmir, all converged on the conversion of KLF into JKLF under the leadership of Amanullah Khan, the link between PoK activists and the ISI. Now under the label of JKLF, funds were raised, logistical support was managed and secret calls went to the youth in Kashmir valley to cross over to PoK clandestinely to receive training in arms and subversion in order to liberate their homeland from the clutches of the Indians. More than a hundred training camps manned by retired Pakistan army senior officers were opened at secret places in PoK and areas bordering on the NWFP. JKLF became official spokesman of the armed insurgency movement, which now began to be called as Kashmir Liberation Movement. Scores of terrorist organizations under various names mushroomed in first two or three years of insurgency.

As already said, in those days Farooq Abdullah was in UK. He came close to people who were staunch activists of KLF. As his father was languishing in Indian jail, he had reason to nurse anti-India feelings, which the PoK Diaspora might have tried to exploit. In Muzaffarabad, where he had come to participate in anti-India rallies, he shared public platform with Amanullah Khan to address large gatherings in which he vowed to liberate Kashmir from the control of India. "Till 1975, when the National Conference was out of power, Dr. Farooq Abdullah kept company with Amanullah Khan. In 1974, he even went to the extent of saying " for independence of Kashmir every child would give his blood."

His recorded speech was believed to have been broadcast from Azad Kashmir Radio," writes Jagmohan in his monumental work.¹

Speaking in the course of a debate in the Lok Sabha on change of government in Jammu and Kashmir in 1983-84, some Congress (I) MPs virtually portrayed Dr. Farooq Abdullah as a traitor. Bali Ram Bhagat charged,

"Facts had borne out clearly that Dr. Farooq Abdullah endeared himself to the Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir based militants and they tried to exploit this to the full and, therefore, invited Dr. Farooq Abdullah to attend the annual session of the Plebiscite Front in Mirpur (PoK) in 1974. And it was during this visit that Dr. Farooq Abdullah came in contact with Amanullah Khan and Maqbool Bhat. Dr. Abdullah in his public utterances appealed to the people of Kashmir to rally round the Plebiscite Front functioning on both sides of the ceasefire line and categorically stated that he stood firmly for the inalienable right of the Kashmir people to determine their future,"²

Pakistani papers published photographs of Farooq and Amanullah standing together on a stage in a public rally somewhere in PoK. They were pictured jointly holding up a gun as a mark of solidarity in contemplated armed insurgency in Kashmir. This is the same Amanullah Khan who had triumphantly told a press conference at the UN Headquarters in New York on April 9, 1990 that JKLF kidnappers of Vice Chancellor of Kashmir University and his aide had shot both of them dead in Srinagar. Actually the killing took place on the next day. This shows where the remote control of armed insurgency in Kashmir actually lay.

In 1975 Indira-Sheikh Accord was signed. The Sheikh

¹*My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir*, Jagmohan, New Delhi, 1991. p. 140

²This refers to discussions under Rule 193 on the recent developments in Jammu and Kashmir. Lok Sabha Debates, July 30, 1984 (23 July-27 August 1984) cited in *My Frozen Turbulence ...* loc.cit p. 162. For details see *The Times of India*, April 10, 1990 and Jagmohan *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir*, New Delhi, 1991, p 536 et al.

recalled his son to Kashmir where subsequently he was to become the president of National Conference. After his father's demise in September 1982, New Delhi lost no time in crowning him the new Chief Minister of the State. Once catapulted to the seat of power, Farooq's apparent distancing from KLF and securing his newfound position became the most talked about subject in political circles in Muzaffarabad and in UK. On the sidelines of the Second World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, a large group of his old time UK-based KLF comrades virtually besieged him and confronted him in a rude manner on his turncoat behaviour and accused him of what they called "betrayal of the freedom movement in Kashmir." They had perhaps forgotten that the house of the Sheikh would be the last to let power slip from its hands no matter whatever happened to the people of Kashmir.

Because of Dr. Farooq's rank opportunism and his "betrayal of the freedom movement", secessionists decided to challenge and dislodge him politically. Thus came into existence the Muslim United Front (MUF), which contested elections in 1987. Dr. Farooq Abdulla in an interview to a TV channel blamed PDP leader Mufti Saeed for being responsible for communal violence against Kashmiri Pandit's and creation of Muslmi United Front. It may also be recalled that soon after anti-Pandit violence in 1986, Congress High Command had appointed a committee under Mr. KN Singh to probe into the matter and fix responsibility. The findings of this Committee have been kept under wrap even to this day with allegation that it had indicted Mufti Muhammad Saeed in this case. The outcome of the rigged elections, in which the MUF candidates were roughed up, manhandled or illegally detained, and counting of the votes was rigged, proved to be a turning point in the contemporary history of Kashmir. It was a clear departure from fairness in democratic dispensation: it was a signal to the secessionists that means other than political needed to be pressed into service to achieve the

objective of freedom from a "foreign yoke". Here lay the seeds of an armed insurgency, which having entered the 18th year of its life today (2008), has consumed thousands of innocent lives in Kashmir. Commenting on the Assembly election of March 23, 1987, Jagmohan writers:

"The manner in which the State Assembly election of March 23, 1987 were conducted caused grave misgivings about their fairness. In some constituencies, counting was suspended and the margin of victory for the National Conference candidates turned out to be smaller than the votes rejected. The margin of victory in Bijbehara was 100, in Wachi 122, and in Shopian 336, while in these constituencies the number of votes declared invalid was 1,172, 1,703 and 1,122 respectively. These elections, unfortunately, were followed by the arrest of a number of top-ranking leaders of the Muslim United Front (MUF)."¹

The first victims of armed insurgents in the valley were the members of innocent and defenceless Hindu minority community generally called Kashmiri Pandits. On September 14, 1989, masked terrorists of JKLF gunned down Pandit Tika Lala Taploo, the provincial BJP chief, outside his house in Habba Kadal. On 4 November 1989 Justice Nilkanth Ganjoo fell to the bullets of the terrorists in Maharaj Bazar, Amira Kadal. Avtar Krishen Raina, Lassa Kaul, Pushkar Nath Handoo, Premnath Bhat, Sarvanand Premi and scores of other Kashmiri Pandits were brutally done to death in their homes, offices and public places. AK-47 wielding murderers let loose a reign of terror. By the end of the year 1990, more than a thousand Kashmiri Pandits in Srinagar and other places in the valley had been gunned down. Civil administration collapsed like a house of cards; the coalition government of Congress and NC resigned, abandoning the people to their fate in, an hour when they needed protection and guidance. Like cowards of no substance, peoples' elected representatives ran away from the valley and settled down in

¹*My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir*, loc. cit. p. 163

government quarters in Jammu to maintain their secret rapport with the militants. They managed security protection for themselves though in fact they never needed it. Thus in the safe haven of Jammu, far away from the scene of massacre and mayhem, they basked in the sun of their affluence, influence and in the safety and security of their "hideouts". They wanted security not against a surprise attack by the militants because they were hand in glove with them, but from the crowds who might come to know of their perfidy and then besiege them in their hideouts. Under the instructions of the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, 70 hardcore terrorists had been set free between July and December 1989 despite their detention order being confirmed by the Advisory Board headed by the Chief Justice of Jammu and Kashmir. Having tendered his resignation as chief minister, the buoyant Farooq took a flight to London, rejoined his family, and, far from the madding crowds, cheerfully played golf on lush green fields of his UK hometown.

While those who ruled the roost in Kashmir till yesterday in the name of elected representatives of the people of Kashmir enjoyed full security and safety in their official bungalows in far off Jammu and the blood of hapless people of the valley continued to be spilt by their own compatriots.

By January 1990, the city of Srinagar plunged into a state of total chaos. Law and order collapsed, lawlessness and insecurity became rampant, and the hunting of the Pandits continued. Sections of vernacular press suddenly became hostile to them, surely more to keep the militants in good humour and play safe with them. *Al Safa* echoed threats issued by insurgents to the minuscule religious minority through loud speakers fitted to mosque tops. The loud warning to the Pandits was that they must leave the valley within 24 hours failing which their life and honour were in the throes of danger. On the night of 19 January 1990 hundreds of thousands of Muslim of the city came out on the

streets and lanes and bye-lanes of Srinagar raising loud Islamic slogans of *Allah-o Akbar*, *Kashmir banega Pakistan*, *Azaadi ka mallah kya la ilaha ilallah* etc.¹ With government in shambles, with law and order thrown to winds, with gun-wielding terrorists having a field day and with threat to life and honour looming large, the hapless community of the Pandits had only one option of survival, that of leaving their age-old homes and hearths and going into exile in unknown lands, environs and people. The exodus of the entire community within a week or two is a heart-rending story.² The Valley's ethnic cleansing task was completed.

In its report to the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), an influential NGO at the UN Human Rights Commission, the Government of India stated the insurgency situation in Kashmir in these words:

"The violence in the State has been characterised by the elimination of political leaders, workers and their relatives to prevent all democratic political activity and create a total vacuum; the killing of civil and local police officials to paralyse and isolate the administration; intimidation of the judiciary to create a breakdown of the legal system; attacks on and killing of the intelligentsia, including educationists, lawyers, doctors and even religious leaders, to silence dissent; the targeted killing of members of the Hindu minority community, which has led to the exodus of over 2,50,000 members of the community resulting in a change in the very demographic profile of the area and blatant religious cleansing; use of indiscriminate violence against innocent civilians generally to create terror; and, selective killing of media persons and attacks on media installations to cause, not merely a breakdown of independent journalism, but also to force the media to act as a mouth-piece."³

At another place the official statement of the Government of India goes on to say as this:

¹For comprehensive information see *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir* by Jagmohan, New Delhi, 1991, Chapter V et seq.

²See Chapter xiii titled 'Frightened Pigeons and Forsaken Community' in *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir*, n

³*Human Rights in Kashmir: Report of a Mission*, Geneva, 1995, p. 106

18 / CONTEMPORARY KASHMIR POLITICS: SOME INSIGHTS

...As mentioned above most of the Kashmiri Hindu community, which up to then had lived in very good terms with their Muslim neighbours fled from the Valley in early 1990. The assassination of a number of leading Hindus and threats of violence by the militants were enough to persuade the Hindu community to flee. There can be no doubt that the militants who saw the Hindus as potential supporters of the security forces welcomed the flight. The small Sikh community of Kashmir has suffered relatively little violence, but a number of Sikhs serving in the police or other government services have been murdered."¹

Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, on Internally Displaced Persons, Francis Deng, has, in his report on Kashmir IDPs² corroborated the statement of the Government of India submitted to ICJ. Though the exodus of the Pandits was nothing new in their chequered history yet their present exodus was altogether different in essence. It was *en masse*. During the rule of the autocratic and fanatical Sultans of mediaeval times or the tyrannical Afghans of 18th century, the Pandits had managed to survive many onslaughts and persecutions and had somehow adjusted to non-conducive circumstances thrust on them. But the present exodus happened in a "secular and democratic" India in which J&K is the only Muslim - dominated state from among 27 federating units. It happened after a forty-year long "freedom struggle" of all Kashmiris from the autocratic monarchy. And the patent slogan of Kashmir freedom fighters was "*Sher-i-Kashmir ka kya irshad/ Hindu, Muslim, Sikh ettehad*". What had happened to this cherished slogan? Where had its upholders and their bombast gone? What had happened to the claim that Kashmir was the secular model of India? What would be the impact of ethnic cleansing of Hindus in Kashmir on the secular and democratic profile of India? And what bearing would this development have on

¹Ibid p.68

²See www.un.org section on IDPs, and then Kashmir.

regional strategies? These were some of the questions, which the victimised Pandits naively thought might spoil the peace of mind of people in the corridors of power in New Delhi. Nothing happened. Nothing happens when the truth is eaten up by falsehood. At the end of the day "secular" Indian Union seems to be reconciled to an Islamised Kashmir within secular India. That could be one of the dimensions of Indian secularism or one of the meanings of larger autonomy.

It is an established fact that Pakistan has been playing key role in abetting armed insurgency in Kashmir. Over the years, Kashmir issue has been internationalised and the "freedom movement" has been linked to international Islamic movements struggling to acquire and safeguard the "rights" of the Muslims world over. Being a predominantly Muslim region, Kashmir is integral to this over-arching phenomenon. It is no more an isolated and a local issue. Two outstanding experts on South Asian affairs, Yossef Bodansky and Vaughn S. Forrest have ably brought out Pakistans role in Kashmir insurgency and the linkage of Kashmir turmoil to various Islamist movements.¹

This documentary evidence has been incorporated in order to provide a clear background to circumstances and conditions leading to the eruption of terrorism in Kashmir. With known ideological commonality between the local Kashmiri separatist political leadership and insurgent elements, it was evident that the first brunt would fall on helpless Pandit religious minority of the valley. Right from the days of Nehru, the central leadership had been orchestrating Kashmir as the secular model of India. Alas they did not realise that in raising this dangerous and disastrous slogan they were signing the death warrant of the religious minority of Kashmiri Pandits in the valley. The first assault of

¹In a study titled *The Kashmir Connection* of May 21, 1994 conducted under the aegis of the Task Force on Terrorism & Unconventional Warfare of the House Republican Research Committee of the US House of Representatives. (*Annexure II*).

the armed insurgents in 1990 was undertaken to destroy this much boasted "secular model". Thus befell the Pandits what befell them. A pragmatic Prime Minister of India would have sought from the State leadership not only constitutional and institutional but also logistical safeguards for the minuscule religious minority of Pandits of Kashmir in view of what it had suffered at the hands of the locals and others on the fall of Baramulla and Muzaffarabad to the tribal incursion in October 1947. That horrendous story was never told, and instead what has been orchestrated is a great lie and a canard to mislead unsuspecting Indian people and the world at large. Issues like these drew the attention of the Working Group on Minorities, a subsidiary of the UN Human Rights Commission, and it found reason to add one more definition to a set of definitions of "Minority". That definition, to quote the source is "a reverse minority as in the case of Kashmiri Pandits".¹

As will be observed, Rishi Dev has referred to many significant happenings and conclusions but only in a passing manner. Perhaps he could have divulged much more and in somewhat fuller detail. But he has not. This made my job a bit difficult, and I painstakingly filled the gap by writing this elaborate note and added footnotes to the text. For example, he has at a couple of places hinted that local leadership was playing a double game. This needed to be elucidated. Hence some detail in this note. In order to give our readers a vivid picture of how the Kashmiri Muslim leadership was viewing Indian "secularism" in the context of relations with Kashmir, we annex to this biographical work the English translation with annotations of an Urdu monograph titled "*Kashmir mein aksariyyat ko aqalliyat mein badalne ki sazish*" (The Conspiracy of Converting Kashmir Majority into a Minority) authored by a prominent member of National

¹See *Minutes of Working Group on Minorities*, UNHRC at Website www.un.org (Go to Human Rights Commission/Council and then to Working Group on Minorities).

Conference in 1982 who is now the leader of opposition in Kashmir Legislative Assembly.

Before closing this note, it is pertinent that I express thanks to the managers of *Kashmir Sentinel* who generously provided me the documents that have been reproduced as Annexures to the English text.

Introduction

For centuries in the past the Valley of Kashmir remained for the world a shining example of fraternity and tolerance among the people of different faiths and communities.¹ Saints and savants have, intermittently adorned and enriched this cultural tradition through their spiritual and moral purity. Great upholders of unity and solidarity as the Kashmiris are, they have earned fame in the whole world for this quality of character.

Unfortunately, their admirable culture became an eye sore for some people. As a result, this rose-garden met with its bad days and ruination under foreign subjugation. This led to some bitterness among people, and some of their groups began distancing from one another. Conspiracies were hatched against her. However, by and large, the people resisted their adversary with determination.

In the early years of this century (21st) when the struggle for freedom was in full swing in Kashmir, negative forces were busy working to divide the people of Kashmir along religious line. Nevertheless, under the banner of National Conference² and under the leadership of Sher-i-Kashmir

¹This is an irresponsible and historically incorrect statement uttered by many Kashmir observers without trying to find out who said it and to what purpose.

²The most popular political party of the State founded by Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah and his colleagues in 1938 after he left All J&K State Muslim Conference.

Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah¹, entire Kashmiri nation, irrespective of religion or community, rose as a single solid bloc to defeat negative elements and work in unity for the freedom of Kashmir.

From 1931 down to the present day, Kashmir political movement has passed through many stages. In order to translate *Naya Kashmir*² dream into reality many valiant sons of Kashmir had, prior to the attainment of freedom in 1947, made the sacrifice of their precious lives. They had suffered torture and oppression in various ways. Being associated with the freedom struggle, I, too, was a witness to many ups and downs of its history.

Sometimes I talked to my friends about my long and arduous political journey. Many of them sincerely suggested to me that I should put my recollections in black and white. It gives me great pleasure to have brought these reminiscences to their completion. I am happy to say that I could fulfill the wishes of my friends.

The purpose of recording my experiences and observations gathered from my long career as a political activist is simple. I want that future generations of Kashmiris should make a realistic and objective assessment of the factors that have led to the ongoing situation in Kashmir.

¹Born in 1905 at village Soura, Srinagar, he took M.Sc.degree in Chemistry from Aligarh Muslim University, He was appointed teacher in J&K State but after some time resigned and began his independent political career. The most outstanding stalwart of Kashmir freedom movement, the Sheikh and his party endorsed the accession of J&K State to the Indian Union in 1947. He became the Prime/Chief Minister of the State twice and died in 1984. He remains buried in Hazratbal vicinity on the bank of the Dal Lake. Kashmiris gave him the epithet of 'The Lion of Kashmir'. (Sher-i-Kashmir)

²One B.P.L.Bedi, a known adherent of communist ideology authored the famous manifesto of National Conference. He and his wife Freda exercised much influence on the Sheikh during those historical days. (Or the Sheikh used them to broaden the base of freedom movement). The leftists had a great say in the drafting of the manifesto and the renowned communist and once Srinagar District Secretary of NC, namely late Niranjannath Raina, ...
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We know of some people who are in the habit of disparaging a movement that began in 1931.¹ They do so just because they are not fully aware of the events of history. The fact is that this movement had been initiated with honest intentions and without any self-aggrandizement. It is true that even at that point of time, there were some elements that were complacent with perpetuation of retrograde political system. There were others who would make an attempt of linking up economic development programs with religion and thus were trying to compartmentalize Kashmiri society and let people remain caught in the web of economic destitution.²

But the masses of people fully understood the utility and importance of *Naya Kashmir*³ programme. A vast majority of our compatriots lived in a state of expectancy. They looked for a ray of light at the end of the tunnel. The masses of the people, reposing trust in the leadership of Sheikh Muhammad 'Abdullah had led the movement to its success.

I distinctly remember that in 1947, the Sheikh, who had been prosecuted for leading the Quit Kashmir Movement⁴, was set free⁵. He addressed a large gathering assembled on

... in a television interview in 1980s telecast from Srinagar Doordarshan, was asked by the commentator what had brought him to the National Conference. Lifting a volume of *Naya Kashmir* in his hand he said that that document was instrumental in dragging many Kashmiri intellectuals to the NC. My intermittent personal interaction with Raina convinced me that in reality it was he who had drafted the reputed document *Naya Kashmir*. A very humble and low profile intellectual of great integrity, he never made the story public.

¹That year the Sheikh left the Muslim conference and floated his NC.

²This refers to the agenda of Muslim Conference.

³Op.cit. p. 1 fn 3

⁴NC gave a call that the Maharaja should leave the State of Jammu & Kashmir. This became a movement called Quit Kashmir Movement. It drew inspiration from Gandhi ji's Quita India Movement of 1942.

⁵This happened because of pressure on the Maharaja from Mahatma Gandhi and Congress leadership.

Hazuri Bagh¹ ground in Srinagar. In his speech he said that a struggle had been launched for running a responsible government in the state, and for that, many sacrifices had been made. He also said that when Kashmiris raised their voice against autocratic regime, Indian National Congress and the Communist Party of India provided them moral and financial support². The Sheikh said that the people had to continue their efforts to carry forward the program of *Naya Kashmir*. He said that in a programme like that the Kashmiri Hindu would be nothing less than the lodestar.³

The struggle continued and the autocratic rule came to an end.⁴ We became part of a big democracy and began looking for the realization of our dreams of freedom to come true. But with the passage of time, politics also began to take new turns. The zeal and zest that had marked the National Conference movement began to wane. Sloth overtook the organization. It was no more the NC of pre-1947 period. We know not what we forgot in this long political journey. The *Naya Kashmir* program was relegated to dark and blind alleys because of lack of interest. Those who struggled against reaction themselves became reactionaries. Religion overshadowed not only the movement but also its politics. The situation came to a pass in which both Kashmir and

¹Now re-named Iqbal Park. It was in this park where the NC and other hooligans in the crowds listening to an address by Indira Gandhi, had bared themselves shamelessly and Indira Gandhi remarked that Kashmiris did not need jobs but trousers..

²For fuller information on the role of Communist Party, see *Imperialist Maneuvers in Kashmir 1846 – 1946* by Niranjannath Raina, Delhi, 1985.

³This perception and statement stand diametrically opposite to what he thought of the Kashmiri Hindus later on (*dhimmis*) and how he labeled them as Indian agents in his biography *Atash-e-China*.

⁴The ouster of Maharaja Hari Singh in 1947, following the repulsing of the attack from tribesmen and the State's accession to the Indian Union, is a sordid story fraught with deceit and calumny. See relevant portions of V.P. Menon's work *The Sardar*.

Kashmiriyat, hitherto engrossed in the lofty teachings of Lal Ded and Shaykhul-'Alam', were torn to shreds.²

How did all this happen and why? This anathema has been nibbling at my inner self. Now that the sun of my life is setting, I ask myself whether we committed a mistake somewhere somehow.

This dilemma has pulled me down to the depths of past reminiscences. Whatever was retrieveable is set forth in these pages. I have tried to bring into public gaze how we, with all sincerity and dedication, had begun our political journey for reconstruction of Kashmir. But alas our own political leaders brought us to this immensely dreadful and abhorrent state of affairs. It appears that Kashmiri people have been betrayed. Our fight was for peace and truth. We had consigned our days and nights to the task of fulfilling all those aspirations that contributed to the prosperity and welfare of people of all faiths and communities in the state. But alas there existed some crooks and charlatans among power seekers who had no qualms of conscience in looting and vandalizing the innocent people and serve their selfish interests. Instead of helping people to strengthen bonds of fraternity, they worked to divide them and make them one another's enemy.

The struggle for freedom was not the struggle of any specific community. It was a struggle of the nation as a whole. After all, we had to live as one single and united nation. We had to co-exist and, evidently, we needed a healthy philosophy of life — honest and sincere intentions and progressive ideas, not hollow and emotional slogans.

¹Regarding controversy on Shaykhul-'Alam, see *Kashmir and its People*, ed. M.K. Kaw, New Delhi 2004, p. 135 et. seq.

²This paragraph subtly refers to the antics of the Sheikh after his return from Lake Success where he had gone as part of the Indian delegation to expose the case of Kashmir's invasion by Pakistan sponsored tribesmen. August 9, 1953 was the culmination point of his changed mind and pressure of circumstances.

Then alone could we reach the destination that has eluded us thus far; then alone could the vision of *Naya Kashmir* dawn upon our younger generation of twenty-first century; then alone will Hindus and Muslims coexist in harmony and Kashmir will once again return to an atmosphere of peace and tranquility. The people of Kashmir will retrieve their heritage of unity and solidarity and will breathe the air of freedom in the words of saint-poet Laleh Ded:

Shiv chhoy thaleh thaleh rozan
Mo zan Heund teb Musalman
Trukay chbhukh soy chhay sahibas seti zan

And Nund Rishi says:

Aksay melis majih henden

I wish we could follow what our distinguished poet Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor said:

Nyay treview maay theview paneh weyn
Poz mobabbat begereview paneh weyn
Heund shaker dod chbhuh Musalman saf saf
dod the beyih shakkar raleview paneh weyn.

In short while referring to our bright and radiant past, I would consider it my moral duty to state that I am not a scholar or a versatile writer. My purpose is not to make a show of erudition, which I never had. I have been a humble political activist throughout my life. My aim is to record my experiences and reminiscences in simple words and to reflect the painful soul of Kashmir to my readers, and particularly to those who induced and encouraged me to put them in black and white.

Reshi Dev

1. The Period of Many Hopes (Pre – 1947)

It was the summer of 1931. The weather was warm; so was political atmosphere in Kashmir. Rumours were galore, one following the other. Soon an atmosphere of suspense began to loom large and people hitherto warm to one another began to withdraw to their shell: they began to look at one another with distrust. Everybody seemed to be caught in a state of whispers and suspense. Inexplicably one felt that the air had become somewhat stifling.

At this point of time I was just a school going lad of sixth class. A rumour spread in our village that something terrible had happened in the city (Srinagar). Twenty-two persons were said to have fallen to the bullets of the police in Srinagar Central jail¹. This caused great anguish and dejection among the people and a wave of anger swept the entire village. The people of Zainapors, a rural locality 50 kilometers to the south of Srinagar, also expressed their deep anguish and anger on this heart-rending tragedy. A wave of displeasure against the Maharaja² swept the minds of the people. Members of the majority community in Kashmir were not only angry and full of hatred against the Maharaja of Kashmir but also began nursing similar sentiments against the members of the minority community. This was perhaps the reason why the Hindus of

¹The incident refers to the firing on political activists detained and imprisoned in the Central jail. These activists had risen in revolt against the autocratic regime of the day.

²Hari Singh

the valley were beset with fear and apprehension of sorts. I distinctly remember that the Hindus of my village were also under a spell of fear and insecurity. One could sense that they were apprehensive of those whom they called their brethren. The situation in the valley had come to this sordid state of affairs.

In order to express their anger against the Maharaja for the killings in Srinagar central jail, a large crowd of emotionally surcharged and volatile people had attacked the minority community in Vichar Nag.¹ Some of their houses were set on fire. Cases of arson took place at some more places in which the Hindus were targeted. In particular, the Hindu business community in Maharaj Ganj² locality in Srinagar was viciously vandalized, and in the twinkling of an eye, its flourishing bazaar was wrecked.

This was the situation in the city. The villages, too, were not spared. In our neighbouring town of Shupiyan, the majority community staged anti-Maharaja demonstrations and brought out a massive rally. A police officer, named Madhav Kaul was trying to pacify the surging crowds. The demonstrators overpowered him and trampled him to death on spot. The lynching of this police officer belonging to the Pandit community intensely scared entire Hindu population of the area. Today they were scared of their own brethren who, until recently, had shown them love and affection. Everybodys heart seemed to be filled with hatred, anger and mistrust.

¹A locality, close to Soura, the birthplace of Sheikh 'Abdullah, Vichar Nag was the first halting station for the Kashmiri Hindus proceeding on pilgrimage to the holy Gangabal. There was a temple and an improvised rest house in the proximity of Vichar Nag spring, which was held in reverence by the pilgrims and they usually bathed in its water. The small Hindu minority of Vichar Nag gradually migrated to the inner parts of the city of Srinagar after they faced attacks during 1931 riots.

²The famous business centre at Zaina Kadal in Srinagar. Many Punjabi shopkeepers had their shops in this market and they were doing wholesale business.

The Hindus and Muslims were gradually distancing from each other and the dome of religious tolerance was showing cracks and cleavages.

The fact is that there were several reasons for the growing bitterness, disappointment and distancing between the Hindu and Muslim communities in the State. Kashmiri Muslims were made to believe that if there was at all any hindrance in the way of putting an end to the rule of the Maharaja in Kashmir it was only the Hindu minority community.¹ The Hindus were made to believe that the liquidation of the autocratic rule of the Maharaja would end up in giving rise to a situation of uncertainty for them. As such they began to think that they were insecure without the Maharaja at the helm of affairs.² This sense of fear was not totally unfounded. After all, pages of the history of two or three centuries in the immediate past were open to them. They had not forgotten the tyranny and oppression unleashed on them during the rule of the Chaks³ and Pathans. Those atrocities were still fresh in their memory. They had begun to feel that whatever little respite they had been able to find under the Dogra rule was going to be

¹Generally Kashmir valley majority associated the Hindus of Kashmir with Indian presence in Kashmir. This is reflected in the Sheikh's biography *Atash-i- Chinar* but very wrongly. It is strange that the largest beneficiaries of Indian presence in Kashmir were the members of the majority group and their leaders but they managed to bring the onus to the doorsteps of the minuscule minority of Hindus of Kashmir. India was instrumental in wresting power from the Dogra ruler and handing it over to the Sheikh whose third generation continues to hold it by teeth as a family estate under the thin veneer of democracy. The worst part of the story is that Indian leadership always tried to project the existence of a minuscule Hindu minority in Kashmir as its secularist symbol. This fallacious and disastrous slogan of myopic Indian neo-colonialists carried in its fold the death warrant for the helpless Pandit religious minority. Their extirpation from their homeland in 1990 is a sequel to the nonsensical "secular symbolism."

²History has shown that these apprehensions were not unfounded.

³Chak is distorted version of Sanskrit word Chakra. Lankar Chak (Alamkarachakra) was a Damara leader from Dray. He had sought ...

wrapped up.¹ A handful of Kashmiri Hindus close to the corridors of power felt that the liquidation of autocratic rule of the Maharaja meant the end of their position of influence. They knew that with the reins of political power passing into the hands of the masses of people, they would lose the few privileges they hitherto enjoyed unhindered.²

The main reason leading to two communities distancing from each other was that the cry for freedom in Kashmir did not come from streets and lanes (as is the case with mass movements). It came from the mosques and shrines where people congregated in the name of religion and religious appeal. This left little space for Kashmiri Hindus who would, eventually get marginalized. Ironically, their marginalization was despite the fact that it were they who had raised the issue of protection of the rights of Kashmiris at a time when Kashmiri Muslims did not even think of political freedom let

... Raja Suh Dev's help and had settled with his clan in Trehgam. See *Rajatarangini* viii, 2482-83 and *Tarikh-i-Kashmir* by Hasan Shah p. 217. Kaji Chak (Kanchan Chakra.) was instrumental in unleashing oppression against the Hindus in Kashmir. See *Babaristan-i-Shabi*, (*infra*) relevant portions.. Chaks were active during the reign of Sultan Fath Shah and also during the period when Musa Raina was functioning as vizier.

¹It is a fact of history that after the advent of Islam in Kashmir around A.D. 1339, the only period during which the Hindus of the valley lived without actual fear to their life and honour was the one century of Dogra rule (1846 – 1947). The rest of Kashmir history is replete with oppression of the Hindus. See *Babaristan-i-Shabi*, tr and annotated by K.N. Pandit, Calcutta 1990. See also *Kashmir and its people*, (ed.) M.K. Kaw, New Delhi 2004, p. 135. See *Tohfatu'l-Abbab* (MS) Br. Museum, London.

²It has to be reminded that while there were a handful of Pandit petty government officials during the reign of Hari Singh who might have thought that way, but there was a vast majority of those who had walked shoulder to shoulder with political activists demanding the ouster of autocracy and its replacement by a popular government. In fact the freedom movement was essentially the brainchild of Kashmiri Pandits who had gone to Lahore for educational pursuits in the first decade of the 20th century and had formed a group to chalk out the structure and plan of the movement. They were also

alone initiating a struggle for it.¹ It were the Kashmiri Hindus who had brought pressure on Dogra regime in the first quarter of 20th century that no non-state subject should be inducted into the service of the state government. It were they who had pleaded for disallowing non-state subjects the purchase of landed property in the state. Maharaja Hari Singh accepted these demands after much hesitation, and in 1927, the State Subject Notification was issued. It is this historic decision that has helped the State maintain its special status in one way or the other even after acceding to the Indian Union in 1947. This was made possible only because of the efforts of the Kashmiri Hindus. It is an irony that today while the prime beneficiaries of this measure of far-reaching consequences are the Muslims of Kashmir, the Kashmiri Hindus have been extirpated from their homeland. Under a different plan, meticulously chalked out by the planners, religion and politics in Kashmir were getting mixed up.² One can say that it was the misfortune of Kashmir that at that crucial hour of her contemporary history, there was no clear-headed politician who could give this political movement a right direction.³

...in touch with Sir Muhammad Iqbal, the famous poet and thinker. Influential families among Pandit Diaspora in other parts of India like Lucknow, Allahabad, Delhi, Amritsar and Jaipur lent strong support to the ideas of a popular rule for Kashmir.

¹It is believed that the section of government employees among Kashmiri Hindus during the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh had initiated the passing of a law by virtue of which no non-state subject could be enrolled in the state services. Of course the Hindus wanted to protect their interests but the passing of law was immensely beneficial to the Muslim population of the State as well. This law of state subject became the basis of conceding special status to Jammu & Kashmir State in the Indian Constitution.

²See Annexure I

³This sentence puts a question mark on the real intentions of Sheikh Abdullah who was the towering leader at this point of time in Kashmir history. This is precisely the view of a close political associate of the Sheikh namely Kashyapa Bandhu. See his letters published by *Kashmir Sentinel*.
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There was no political heavyweight who could have infused revolutionary spirit into the movement for strengthening political and economic stability of the state instead of allowing it to slide into a morass of religious frenzy. Poverty and destitution were not the story of only the Muslims of the State. A majority of Hindus was also seriously debilitated by these deprivations. My own family was one of the worst hit households. Those were the days of great hardship for us so much so that getting a two square meal was nothing short of a miracle. What I mean to emphasize is that in no case was the lot of the Hindus better than that of any other community in Kashmir.¹

¹Some biased Kashmiri historians have intentionally distorted the history of freedom struggle in Kashmir. One glaring distortion says that the Hindus in the valley were living a better and prosperous life in comparison to the Muslims.

2. My Early Life

I was born in May 1917 in a poor peasant family in village Zainpora. I spent my childhood in my family in that village. Zainpora is situated at a distance of 9 kilometers from Bijbehara¹ on the bank of Tongri stream. This village was laid by Kashmirs famous and popular ruler Sultan Zaynul-'Abidin². The village takes its name (Zainpora) after him. My early schooling was in my village. In comparison to its neighbouring villages, Zainpora had the privilege of a primary school in those days. Parents of neighbouring villages sent their kids to our primary school. In the entire area, a lower middle school existed only in Bijbehara. After completing the primary school in Zainpora village, I joined that lower middle school. The distance of 9 kilometers that lay between my village and Bijbehara had to be covered on foot twice a day. Evidently it was a tiresome and exhausting exercise for a ten year old lad. But I had great urge for education and learning. I agreed to face all difficulties with a smile. After completing the 6th standard in Bijbehara School, I wanted to continue my education and, therefore, had to move to Anantnag, the district headquarter.

¹Vijayeshwara Belareh of *Rajatarangini*. (tr. Stein) vol. .ii, p.463. Sultan Shihabu'd-Din (A.D. 1359 – 1378) destroyed its massive temple. *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, (tr.) K.N. Pandit, Calcutta, 1991, p. 34

²A.D 1422 – 1473. Kashmiris know him by his pet name of Bud Shah. He built towns, canals, and bridges and did many works of public utility. For details see *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, (tr.) K.N. Pandit, Calcutta, 1991, p. 34

There existed two private schools in the entire district of Anantnag; these were the Hanafiyyeh¹ School and the Mission² High School. Apart from these, there was also a government Central School where education up to 7th standard was imparted. I took admission in the Mission High School but owing to financial and other constraints, I had to give up my studies half way. It was beyond the financial capacity of my parents to rent me a room in Anantnag. Those were the days when my family lived from hand to mouth. Apart from this, the thinking of the people in those days was quite different. Unlike what we find today, they were not seriously interested in encouraging their children to receive education. My father and grand father, though not having any formal education, had been trained in traditional Pandit lore. They eked out a living by taking up their ancestral profession of peasantry. All this forced me to give up my educational career half way.

For about a year or little more, I was in my home lending a helping hand to my parents in their daily chores of life. My burning desire for formal education had been dashed to ground. Lahore was a reputed centre of education in those days. For this reason that city had acquired fame throughout Northern India. I had heard much about its fame and impulsively felt a fascination for this seat of learning.

¹The Sunni Hanafi sect that adhered to the theological school of Abu Hanifa, opened Hanafiyyeh schools in Kashmir at that point of time. These schools were the precursors of *darsgahs*, the Jamaat-e-Islami schools in Kashmir, which played a very significant role in sensitizing Wahhabi religious feelings among the Sunni Muslims. Religious extremist leaders in contemporary times, being the ardent supporters of militancy are generally the alumni of Jamaat-e-Islami schools of which Maulana Mowdoodi was the founder.

²Both Catholic and Protestant missionaries had opened educational institutions in Kashmir. In Baramulla, Mill Hill Fathers ran a flourishing institution called St. Josephs High School, which, later on, was raised to Degree College level. There also existed a Convent with a hospital attached to it.

I nursed a desire of going to Lahore and drinking from its fountains of knowledge.

Sometimes it happens that nature facilitates realisation of a burning desires somewhere deep inside us. My luck favoured me and in 1936 — a decade before the independence — when I was only 19 years of age, I found myself heading towards this centre of learning. In Lahore I sought admission in Dayanand Brahma Maha Vidyalaya. In this institute I came into contact with many scholars. Occasionally, I exchanged views on life and its affairs with them. Included among a galaxy of learned men were Thakur Dutt Amrit Dhara, Rai Bahadur Badri Das, Lala Khushhal Chand, and Vishwa Bandhu. Lala Khushhal Chand was the owner of the *Milap*. In his association, I was drawn towards the Arya Samaj school of thought.¹ I found an opportunity of studying the literature of Arya Samaj and also Sanskrit literature. Poverty and penury had brought me very close to the harsh reality of life. Idealistic teachings of these schools did not help bring consolation to my disturbed mind. I stayed there for a year and half.

This was the time when Lahore was also an important centre of India's freedom movement. Some journals published from Lahore usually carried fresh ideas about political freedom and social development. These articles generated an atmosphere of hope and expectation. *Arya Gazette* and *Arya Mistar* were two such journals. I also found opportunity of studying some works on Marxism and also those of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. At that point of time exciting stories of great sacrifices made by martyrs like Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru and Sukhdev were recounted with

¹Arya Samaj movement was a very strong socio-religious movement launched by some leading Hindu personalities in Lahore. It soon spread to whole of Northern India. It essentially aimed at purging Hindu society and religion of obsolete rites and rituals. It aimed at restoring pure Vedic spirit in Hindu religion. Its members were staunch nationalists and played a role in the freedom struggle of India.

much patriotic fervour. Their sacrifices infused a spirit of patriotism in the youth of the country to do something for the motherland. Having heard of those stories and having read them in published material, I, too, was gripped by a desire of making solid sacrifice for the country. Gradually, I began to dream of the freedom of our motherland and its development. Holding these dreams close to my heart I returned to Kashmir after spending some time in Lahore.

On my return to Kashmir, I found that the Muslim Conference¹ was fighting for the rights of the Muslim community only. It was asking for more representation of the Muslims in state services. Muslim Conference was also claiming to be the voice of the freedom movement. The right of land ownership of the tillers was its second aim. In those days the land was the property of the Maharaja alone.

Yuvak Sabha

Some Hindu youth of Srinagar, who had drawn advantage from English education, established a social organization named Kashmiri Pandit Yuvak Sabha. Its aim was to bring about social reform in Hindu society. The organization worked more for social reform and evinced only marginal interests in politics of the state.²

Occasionally, the Yuvak Sabha would take anti-Maharaja stance on some isolated issue for which the British extended their covert support to them.³ Deep inside, the British did not like the Maharaja. Especially, in regard to Gilgit, they were

¹Muslim Conference was a state level political party mostly dominated by the Mirpuri Muslims. It was actually the local version of All India Muslim League. Maulavi Abbas was its prominent leader and Sheikh Abdullah had joined it when he began his political career after resigning as a teacher from State Education Department. See *Atash-e-Chinar*, the biography of the Sheikh.

²Kashyapa Bandhu, the stalwart Hindu reformist leader of the time had enrolled himself in this organization.

³The author does not provide any concrete evidence to support this assertion. (*Translator*).

highly suspicious.¹ As such, they tried to maintain pressure on the Maharaja. Therefore they covertly stimulated every revolt, protest or agitation against the Maharaja. By the same token, they encouraged the Muslim Conference too.²

Around 1931, the Muslim press in Lahore had launched virulent propaganda against the Maharaja. Pamphlets in thousands were distributed carrying a litany of complaints and stories of oppression against Kashmiri Muslims. The purpose of this campaign was to incite the people against the Maharaja. He was alleged to be under the influence of Hindu bureaucracy. In December 1930, a meeting of All India Muslim Conference took place in Lahore. Some educated young Muslim delegates participated in it. On their return to Jammu, they launched series of protest rallies against the Maharaja. It did not generate too much of impact in Kashmir but the fact remains that the British rulers were always looking for making things complicated for the Maharaja of Kashmir.

¹The second and third decade of 20th century saw heightened activities of the British Indian rulers to check possible infiltration of Soviet spies from Central Asia into Kashmir. One of the preventive measures they took was carving Gilgit Agency out of Gilgit Wazarat around 1935 and taking it into direct administrative control. Gilgit Commiserate conducted civil administration of the Agency. Gilgit Scouts were raised from among the local youth but were commanded by the British officers.

²Actually the British began to suspect Maharaja Hari Singh from the time when he declared in a conference of the Indian princes in London that he was "first a patriot and then a subject of the British Empire". One of their ways to denigrate the Maharaja was to suppress his progressive reforms in various walks of life and in legislating some progressive measures leading to amelioration of the condition of the people. I understand a book has been recently published on Maharaja Hari Singh. There is a growing opinion among scholars, including some leftists that the history of Maharaja Hari Singh needs to be re-written. Dr. Karan Singh's work does not do justice to the subject. Is it not ironical that Maharaja Hari Singh, the autocrat, declared himself first a patriot and then the subject of the British Empire while Sheikh Abdaullah, the popular leader was almost prepared to go by the advice of Adlai Stevenson, the American politician running for presidency in 1953? See Annexure III.

The Glancy Commission, appointed after the riots of 1931, submitted its report (to the State government).¹ By way of reaction to it, the Yuvak Sabha initiated an agitation, which is known as Roti Agitation. On becoming public, the Glancy Commission report sent a wave of insecurity to the Hindu community of Kashmir. They came together to protect their rights and interests.

Yuvak Sabha II

After my return from Lahore, I felt a desire to do something for the people. There existed only two platforms in the valley, and these were of the Muslim Conference and Yuvak Sabha. Of the two options before me I could choose only the Yuvak Sabha. This is how I became a member of its Executive Council.

Yuvak Sabha was essentially active in urban Srinagar. The fact is that it was an organization limited to a specific class of the Pandits of Srinagar. I was unfamiliar with their urban life and its style.² Members of this organization were as much unaware about the life in villages as I was about theirs. They had not even the remotest idea of the problems and difficulties of rural people. They had no idea about the backwardness of villages in Kashmir.³ There is a world of difference between the life style in rural Kashmir of those

¹This report was lopsided and carried communal undertones suggesting that the Hindus dominated bureaucracy and administrative structure of the State. Glancy was a senior officer of Indian Civil Service and carried out the mission of the British rulers.

²It is said that rural-urban divide in the valley was true not only for the Hindu but for the Muslim segment as well. One of the glaring results of ongoing militancy is that a sizable group of rural Muslim affluent class has shifted to the city of Srinagar and new rural-urban elite has sprung maintaining close social, economic and matrimonial ties among themselves. On the other hand, the Hindus in exile have also found gradual erosion of the social divide that existed while they lived in the valley.

³The rural areas in all the three regions of the State are still far behind the urban regions in all walks of life.

days and of today. Life in rural areas then was burdened by complications and difficulties. Take my case. After completing my education in Zainpora primary school, I had to foot a distance of 18 kilometers to and fro each day in order to continue my studies in the sixth grade. Medical facilities were totally lacking in villages. An allopathic dispensary was set up in Zainpora after many years of struggle.

In this connection I still remember a painful incident. The Health Department had rented our house for ten rupees a month to open a dispensary. But the doctor in charge of the dispensary told us that only five rupees would be paid to us by way of monthly rent. It meant that as owners of the house, we had to rest content with only half of the amount of rent officially sanctioned. Considering it unjust, we did not agree to the doctors proposal. Later on the doctor played a trick with us and as a result only three rupees a month were fixed as house rent. This we came to know after a lapse of sixteen months when we were paid forty eight rupees for the house rented to the health department. Then another government official came to us and offered to extend his help for getting the amount of rent increased. He took two bundles of barbed wire from us for fencing his orchard. This was the bribe he wanted because after taking the wire he never showed up. Such was the state of affairs in those distant days.

When the building supposed to house the dispensary had to be renovated in accordance with the plan supplied to us, we had to take a loan of fifty rupees from a usurer. According to the agreement that we signed, we were to pay back the principal amount and its half as interest, which made it seventy-five rupees. At the time of receiving the amount of loan in cash, we were actually paid only forty-seven rupees. The interesting thing is that all those involved in this affair were Hindus and we too were Hindus. Every poor man was a victim of oppression and suppression in the dispensation that prevailed at that point of time: there was no question of a Hindu or a Muslim.

3. Kashmir Peasantry

It is totally wrong and baseless to say that prior to 1947 every Hindu in Kashmir was a usurer and that every Muslim was a victim of oppression and injustice.¹ Oppressors and oppressed were there in both communities. Also, there were a handful of people in both communities who practiced usury and *vadi dari* meaning precisely loaning grains against interest. Unfortunately, a large majority of people subsisted on and became victims of this evil practice. Likewise, loan seekers were to be found in both the communities. Interest charged on a sum of one hundred rupees ranged between thirty-six and seventy-five rupees per year. In the case of hoarders (*vadi dari*) the principal amount usually had to be repaid by calculating its one and half as payable amount. Actually this amount had to be paid in kind and not in cash. Hindus and Muslim both had become victims of this tyrannical dispensation. The worst victims were the peasants. Most of the rural Hindu population belonged to this class. I, too, belonged to the family of peasants. In those days it was very difficult for a peasant to make both ends meet after having put in his hard labour in tilling the land and growing the crop. Peasantry essentially depended on the munificence of nature. Rains at proper time meant a good crop. Failure of rains meant total wastage of a peasants labour.

The life of peasants was fraught with many severe

¹This is one unveiling of distortion of ground realities in Kashmir prior to 1947.

hardships. They had to bear the whip of the government and the vagaries of nature. Irrigation system was lacking. People in our rural area had to go to Rishi Nagar in order to divert the water of Vishu¹ into the irrigation canal. Landholders and peasants both had to go at least four to five times a month to direct the flow of water. Hindus and Muslims all assembled together to undertake this task. It was a common issue for them. My family always took lead in such enterprises. Such occasions clearly showed that the two communities in the village were not apart. Villagers everywhere had problems common to all and the Hindus and Muslims in rural Kashmir worked hand in hand to resolve these common problems. My father Nath Ram, being the *Nambardar*² and a petty landholder of the village, always took the lead in undertaking works of public utility. During my childhood the Hindus and Muslims of the village always jointly undertook the irrigation work and other matters of common interest.

Members of both communities stood hand in hand in social events like marriage and death, happiness and despair and in situations of natural calamities. If they had to mount guard in their village against the burglars or if they had to resist the oppressive measures of a government functionary, they did it in unison. People of both communities were hard working and painstaking. Communal harmony was strong and spontaneous so that people, irrespective of the faith they professed, visited and paid obeisance at the shrines to whatever community these belonged. They participated in the *urs* and other religious festivities, be it the celebrations at the shrine of Shamsud-Din Baghdadi or the Dargah of Amir

¹In Kulgam Tehsil.

²The head of the village is called *nambardar* or *muqaddam*. His duty is to report to authorities any major incident in the village that may lead to disruption of law and order, collect annual or bi-annual revenue, serve as a conduit between the administration and the public, provide consultancy service to government officials especially of revenue department and be witness to all major events in the village.

Kabir¹ (in village Vachi)², or at Hindu shrines of Varnag or Avnereh.

As stated earlier, a major problem in the villages was the lack of medical facilities. I, too, have suffered on this count. My mother left me and my brothers and sisters at an early age of thirty-one. Her illness was not really fatal. She was suffering from a sore for which no cure was available around our locality. If there could be a possibility of finding a cure to her illness somewhere away from home, we could not afford it because of our stark poverty and lack of resources. Death snatched away my mother from us at the prime of her youth just for want of proper medical aid at proper time.

In the entire *tehsil* (sub-district), there existed no government or private school. In the town of Anantnag, there was a Government Central School where students could study up to the 7th standard only. Unemployment was rampant. A few literate persons of the village could, at the best, manage to secure the job of a *patwari* (land record keeper) or of a peon. Communication system was far worse. A journey from Zainapor to Shupiyar or Kulgam or Bijbehara or any other place was possible only either on foot or on horseback.

Social life was infested with superstition; illiteracy bred ignorance and obstinacy among the people. A person afflicted with fever was castigated believing that a jinni or some evil spirit had entered into his or her body. Strange and curious methods were adopted to banish the evil spirit or the

¹Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani, is the well-known Iranian missionary who first visited Kashmir in A.D. 1381 during the reign of Sultan Qutbu'd-Din. He originated from Hamadan in Iran, (the Avestic Hagmatana), where he was held in high esteem as a divine. See also *Tarikh-i-Kashmir* by Hasan Khuihmi, vol. ii, p. 173. For details on the flight of Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani before the invading hordes of Timur, see the history of Hafiz Abru printed in Teheran.

²The Sultan had given the village in endowment to Ali Hamadani's hospice there.

ghost. Sometimes red chili powder was burnt close to the nostrils of the patient. When a "ghost-afflicted" patient was taken to a Maulavi, he would say that the evil spirit was that of a Hindu and as such would be scared away by the hair of a cows body. In the same manner, a Pandit cured a Muslim patient by making him drink water into which the tooth of a boar was dipped. He was told that the evil spirit was of a Muslim and would take to its heels as soon as it drank the water into which the tooth had been immersed.

Thus the cure of most ailments was sought in totems generally resulting in the death of innocent and illiterate people. By and large, the people had become prisoners superstitions and totems. There did exist an odd indigenous medical practitioner (*bakim*) who practiced the indigenous medicine (*tibb*) and Greek medicine but only a handful of people could benefit from his profession.¹ No such medical practitioner existed in our area.

In villages people mostly drew water from local ponds. In our area people in dozens of villages in Ram Pathri used the water of ponds for drinking purposes. Quadrupeds also drank from these sources. Apart from this, people bathed in its water and even washed their clothes in it. In Tongri Nullah² some people used spring water and in Zainapora also spring water was available.

Usury

The condition of peasants was miserable. A peasant who took a loan of one hundred rupees from a moneylender or a

¹It was generally called *Tibb-e Unani* meaning the Greek medicine. It had come to the Muslims through the translation of the works of Galen. The Iranians had brought it to Kashmir and hence it came to be called Unani or Greek. J&k Government Research Library preserves many Persian and Arabic manuscripts on Unani medicine. Generally patent herbs were prescribed. The medical practitioner was called *bakim*, his prescription was called *nuskhab* and the shopkeeper who sold the herbs was called *pinsani* (Kashmiri *pasaer*).

²In Shupivan area

hoarder had to pay back anything between one hundred and fifty to two hundred rupees. He would sign a document to that effect. The moneylender issued no receipt for a small amount like five rupees or ten rupees, which the debtor paid back by way of installment for the liquidation of the debt. He had not the courage to ask for a receipt. As the amount of loan decreased while paying back in regular installments, the moneylender would become unhappy. He would take the case to a court of law and manage to obtain a decree for one and a half or even twice the principal amount plus the expenses of litigation. No repayment was considered valid in absence of a receipt. This was how the moneylenders and hoarders looted the poor peasants.

I am reminded of an incident. A poor person named Amma Chowpan of our village had taken a loan of sixty rupees from a moneylender against a written document for ninety rupees. Even after paying back eighty rupees, he had to continue paying further installments of ten or five rupees to the moneylender for which the latter did not give him any receipt. There was a dispute on some matter between the two and the moneylender filed a suit against Amma Chowpan. After a number of hearings, the court issued its verdict against Amma Chowpan. He was ordered to pay ninety rupees to the moneylender plus the costs. This happened because he did not possess any receipt for the amounts he had paid in installments. This was the sordid state of justice at that point of time. To a large extent, illiteracy among the people also contributed to their destitution and this hurting situation.

A certain person named Khizar Bhat lived in our area. He was a known moneylender and most of the peasants in our localities had fallen into his trap. I am reminded of another sordid story. A poor peasant in Fateh Pora, Anantnag decided to sell two *kanals*¹ of land in order to raise some money needed for the marriage of his grown up daughter.

¹ 1 *kanal* is equal to 20 *maras* and one *marla* is equal to 220 square feet.

A *vadi dar* of the village enjoyed considerable influence in that locality. He got a wink that the peasant wanted to sell his land to raise funds for his daughters marriage. He called him to his place and showed him much sympathy exhorting him not to sell his land. He pretentiously told him that the girl was not only his daughter but a daughter of the whole village. He further said that as long as he was there, the peasant had no need to sell his land. He promised to provide him adequate amount of money on very reasonable terms and that the peasant could return the money in installments after the girl was married. The document showed that the borrower would pay one and a half times the principal amount. Soon after the marriage of the peasants daughter, the moneylender demanded of him to return his money saying that he was preparing to go on *hajj* pilgrimage. The poor peasant was now in a very difficult situation; the buyer who had shown interest in his land was no more willing to buy it. His entreaties to the moneylender made no impact on the latter. Finally, the peasant proposed to sell the same land to him for which he had earlier found a customer. With the money that was payable, the moneylender made him sell three instead of two *kanals*. After snatching three *kanals* from the peasant through fraud and deceit, the moneylender proceeded to Mecca to perform *hajj*. Back from *hajj*, he sent his messenger to the peasant and asked him to lend his pair of bullocks for one day to till the land. The hurt peasant refused to oblige saying that after having lost so much of land, was there still some amount outstanding against him so that he had to lend his pair of bullocks free of rent? The moneylender felt insulted. He had the document that bore the promise of the peasant to pay one and a half times the principal amount. He filed a suit in the court of law and the verdict went against the peasant directing him to pay one and a half times the principal amount plus the costs. It meant disastour for the poor peasant. People in the neighbourhood were fully aware of the matter. They, too, felt sad and depressed by such gross injustice.

A saintly person of village Kamar used to pay occasional visits to this village. He was aware of the oppression inflicted by the moneylender on the poor peasant. Taking pity on the victim, he said loudly in the courtroom that instead of the peasant the decree for payment of the said amount may be issued in his name. He submitted to the judge that the decree in question was totally unjust to the peasant. He warned that if that was the state of justice, then the earth should split into two parts. But the law tied down the hands of the judge. He could not uphold the request of the saintly person. However, the saintly person paid the installments of the amount to the moneylender from his own pocket.

Entrenched landlordism

This is how, in those days landlordism was entrenched in the social structure of Kashmir. In our area, Diwan Badrinath¹ owned a large landed property in Sangran. In Tulkhun, the Wazirs possessed a huge *jagir*. The Razdans² held a *jagir* in Bomipora in Shupiyan and in Borajpora in Pulwama tehsil; Aziz Mir held a huge *jagir*. Most of the peasants in this area usually depended on the munificence of this Aziz Mir either for small cash loans or for support to tilling the land.

So far an impression has been created that prior to 1947 landlords (*jagirdars*) in Kashmir were only the Hindus. It was also said that all Hindus were landlords. Both of these assertions are incorrect. It reflects only communal way of thinking. This false impression was generally created by those members of the majority community who, for their vested interests, were bent upon stoking the fires of communal disharmony right from 1947.³

¹A minister and a landlord during Maharaja Pratap Singh's times.

²Razdan is the sub-cast of Kashmiri Hindus.

³But the author does not give any indication which segment of Kashmir population had "vested interests" and fanned the flames of communal discord? From what he states in pages to follow it is clear that even political parties claiming to be secular indulged in communal politics in Kashmir when their vested interests were at stake.

The fact is that landlords were not only the Hindus. Many Muslims possessed large chunks of land. They exploited the peasants precisely in a way the classical landlords did. For example, Salam Shah and Mirza Musafa Kullo (Museh Kol) and Abdul Ghani Makroo and Shaban Makroo of Gopalpora, Kulgam were big landlords and money-lenders. Amma Lone of Manzipora, Shupiyan was also in the same category. They possessed vast landed property. This is to say that there were Hindus as well as Muslims among the landed aristocracy in Kashmir.¹

Like their Muslim neighbours, most of the rural Hindus were peasants by profession. They, too, faced almost the same problems, which the peasantry in general was facing. For example, when land revenue was to be collected, the Hindu peasant suffered the same oppression as the Muslim peasant did. In those days land revenue was forcibly collected from the peasants. Revenue functionaries snatched the morsel from the hands of tillers and while filling the government stores, they stocked their personal granaries as well. Revenue functionaries like the *Patwari*, and *Girdawar* and police functionaries showed no qualms of conscience in looting the peasants and the tenants. Nearly eighty-five per cent of rural population suffered these atrocities.

¹Actually the landlords who lost their lands had formed a union to demand either reasonable compensation or return of their landed properties. J&K State was the only state in the Indian Union which eradicated landlordism without any compensation to those whose land was attached and the distributed among the tillers.

4. Anti-Autocracy Movement

Freedom struggle against the British rule had gained great momentum throughout India. Muslim Conference was mobilizing masses of people in Kashmir. It was more active in Jammu than in Kashmir because Jammu was easily accessible to Muslim Conference workers based in Lahore and its adjoining areas.¹ In 1922-23 large number of people began taking out protest rallies against the government (of the Maharaja) on food supplies issue. Apart from this, some Muslim leaders were repeatedly sending their demands to the Viceroy. In 1930, Mahatma Gandhi launched the Salt *satyagraha* (non-violent agitation)² and this news was received with great enthusiasm and interest throughout the length and breadth of Kashmir. When the British Indian government arrested Mahatma Gandhi, people in Srinagar went on a strike. Apart from the city of Srinagar, strikes were observed even in smaller towns like Anantnag and Bijbehara in the valley where shops remained closed. In the main bazaars of Srinagar people brought out big protest rallies. It was in these rallies that slogans against the British government were raised for the first time on the soil of Kashmir.³

¹Actually the Muslims of the then Jammu region in which four districts of Poonch dominated Muslim Conference (now under Pakistani occupation) played a vital role. This organization was not based in the valley.

²The agitation was against imposition of tax on salt.

³This is a very interesting piece of information. On the one hand the British agents were extending covert support to anti-Maharaja elements and on the

Maulavi Yusuf Shah

In March 1931, Maulavi Yusuf Shah¹, Mir Waiz of Kashmir, appeared on the political scene of Kashmir. This led to huge anti-Maharaja rallies in the mosques. The wave of communalism swayed many educated Muslim youth including Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah. Spitting fire of communalism in his congregational speeches in the mosques, he began uniting the majority community in the valley for launching a massive anti-Maharaja movement. The flames of communalism gradually engulfed the whole of the valley.

Thus in the background of unfolding situation, the Hindus of the valley began to feel isolated from the freedom movement, which had been the dream of Pandit Hargopal

... other hand for the first time anti-British slogans were raised in Kashmir. This shows that both pro and anti British sentiments were simmering somewhere deep in Kashmiri psyche. The Sheikh had not yet appeared on the political scene of Kashmir.

¹The people of Kashmir have always held the house of Mirwaiz in great respect. Maulavi Yusuf Shah was instrumental in projecting Sheikh Abdullah as the young leader from Kashmir. The House of Mirwaiz has always been in focus in Kashmir politics. When Sheikh Abdullah assumed power in 1947 as Chief Administrator, he came down with a heavy hand on those who pleaded for negotiations with Pakistan for a final settlement of Kashmir dispute. He forced many of those he considered an obstruction in his scheme of things to leave Kashmir. Included among them were Maulavi Yusuf Shah and Prem Nath Bazaz. The former went to Muzaffarabad (PoK), never to return to the valley, while the latter went to Delhi where he remained in close contact with the Pakistani Mission. Others were banished from Srinagar city. One such known person was Pandit Kanhayalal Kaul, a lawyer by profession who settled down in Baramulla. His links with Royists had been made the plea for his banishment. This writer freely interacted with Kaul both in Baramulla and in Jammu where he had moved after the eruption of militancy in Kashmir in 1990. A staunch radical humanist of M.N.Roy's school and an enlightened intellectual, he was disillusioned with the fanatical elements in Kashmir and had lost faith in NC's secularist claims. Kaul was indeed an intellectual giant, well versed in various branches of learning, history, literature, music, philosophy, poetry, especially Urdu ...

Kaul Khasteh¹ and his brother way back in 1931. Muslim Conference's communal attitude made Kashmiri Hindus feel that the movement was something that went against them. In the eyes of the Muslim Conference, more than the autocratic ruler, the Kashmiri Hindu seemed to be its enemy number one. The sin of Kashmiri Hindus was that the ruler of the day happened to be their co-religionist. Thus in the eyes of the communalists, Kashmiri Pandit was framed as the symbol of the government.

The Yuvak Sabha formed by the Hindus of Srinagar lacked concise political agenda. I have already said that this organization was limited to the Hindus of Srinagar only and the issues it raised mostly pertained to the Hindus of urban Srinagar. In short, while the Muslim Conference wanted to carry only the Muslims with it, the Yuvak Sabha wanted to carry only the urban Hindus with it.

But gradually some activists of Muslim Conference began to realize that the progress of Kashmir depended on national unity and harmonious interaction among the people of different faiths. This realization made some of the leaders contemplate a common action plan.²

Over to National Conference

In 1938, Muslim Conference was changed into National Conference under the chairmanship of Ghulam Muhammad

... and Persian. He was a superb conversationalist with devastating humour. One is reminded of great Victorian intellectuals while describing his personality.

¹A well known Kashmir Pandit lawyer and intellectual. For his contribution to the freedom movement in Kashmir, see Abdul Qadir Sarwari's *Do Bhai Do Adeeb*, Amusingly Rahim Rather paints him in dark colours. See *Annexure I*.

²This change has been explained by many writers including Sheikh Abdullah as better understanding of a freedom movement on the basis of ideology rather than religious fervor. However, some have attributed it to parochial stance of Muslim Conference leadership and the strong Kashmiri ego of the Sheikh. The question seldom debated is why did the Sheikh agree

Sadiq.¹ Speaking on this occasion about the atrocities of autocratic rule, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah asserted that it was not only the Muslims of the State who had become the victims of oppression. Non-Muslims, too, were faced with oppressive dispensation. Exhorting the people of the state to remove the autocratic regime, he implored them to maintain communal harmony and unity.

National Conference continued holding protest rallies at different places. I seized an opportunity of attending some of these rallies and nursed deep yearning of becoming a part of the nationalist caravan. I distinctly retain the memory of some of the rallies in which I had taken part. A memorable rally of NC was organized in Kreeri, Anantnag. The president of Anantnag district NC namely Nabeh Ji addressed the gathering. I listened to his speech very attentively. What he said made me think that these people precisely spoke what was in my mind. His speech painted a very healthy and attractive picture of our future. The spirit of fraternity in National Conference and the ideology of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh unity appeared to me highly appreciable, and a cherished ideal. For the first time in my life, I heard Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah addressing a gathering in the village Trunz in Shupiyan. I was immensely impressed by Sheikh Sahibs tall personality and his words went straight to my heart. His voice created in me a burning desire of serving the people of Kashmir and helping them out of their predicament.

... to cease fire at the present LoC in 1948 when the Indian troops were poised for a big thrust on to Muzaffarabad? Has it anything to do with the Sheikh's dislike for the Mirpuris? The author has not explained the real reason for the Sheikh to leave Muslim Conference and form National Conference. Essentially, Sheikh Abdullah was not prepared to succumb to the hegemony of Mirpuri Muslim Conference leadership. It lead to to the creation of National Conference with the Sheikh as its chief.

¹Actually this was a split and not a change. The Muslim Conference shifted it's headquarter to Mirpur (now in PoK) and continued with its political activities.

I distinctly remember that Sheikh Sahib had given a bit of mind to the communal forces. He had told the masses of people that some of the leaders were receiving a stipend from the Maharaja and were supporting feudal and reactionary forces.

In order to prove its existence, the Muslim Conference had also started a campaign against the government of the day charging it of perpetrating atrocities on Muslim community. It organized rallies and carried out agitation. The British colonial power was exerting pressure on the Maharaja. It impressed upon him to bring about some administrative reforms. The Glancy Commission was constituted. Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz represented the Hindu community. After concluding its deliberations, the Commission, rightly or wrongly, made in its report some suggestions of offering Muslims some social, economic and political privileges.

Roti Agitation

The Hindus could not elicit any relief from this report. The truth was that the Commission almost snatched the morsel from their hands. They strongly believed that the Commission had sidelined them. Yuvak Sabha was not angry only with the Commission but also with Prem Nath Bazaz.¹ It believed that Bazaz had not been able to advocate their case before the Commission in an effective manner. As a reaction to the report of the Glancy Commission, the Hindus initiated an agitation known as Roti Agitation in the contemporary history

¹Perhaps the Yuvak Sabha was expecting too much from Bazaz. It was unrealistic on its part to expect the Glancy Commission to show the Hindus any favour or sympathy. Glancy was working only within the policy parameters of the British colonial power. One of the reasons for Premnath Bazaz to show his disappointment with his community members was the way they treated him unbecomingly as their representative to the Glancy Commission without understanding the ground realities of colonization. The Pandits are reported to have had no qualms of conscience in hurling abuses on Bazaz.

of Kashmir. The main purpose of this agitation was to safeguard the interests of the Hindus. The movement was also directed against the Maharaja and the British rulers were reported to have covertly encouraged it.¹ The British had been supportive of any movement launched against the Maharaja. They had colonial interests; they knew that their intervention in Kashmir was immensely important to resist the growing influence of Russia. Kashmir had strategic and geographical importance to the designs of British imperialism (in Central Asia). From here, they could maintain a vigil on entire Asian continent. They were aware that in ancient times, the Buddhist missionaries had begun the propagation of their faith in Central Asian region from Kashmir. This is the reason why the British were adamant in thrusting their Resident on Maharaja Pratap Singh or even earlier to that. They needed one or the other pretext to carry forward their agenda.²

The British colonial power was ultimately successful in pushing forward its imperialist agenda. They established a British Trade Agency in Srinagar with a view to keep an eye on the States trade relations with Central Asia. They managed to obtain strategic area of Gilgit (Gilgit Agency) on lease. They were actively engaged in fomenting trouble in the valley with the purpose of bringing pressure on the Maharaja

¹This statement needs to be substantiated.. I very much doubt that this could have happened. The British colonial power never trusted the Pandits of Kashmir and considered them part and parcel of Indian national mainstream.

²In fact the British Foreign Office had been insisting upon the *Raj* from the times of Maharaja Ranbir Singh to install its representative in Kashmir. Maharaja Ranbir Singh was a strong ruler and managed to forestall such schemes a number of times. But in Maharaja Pratap Singh, the British found a weakling who, despite his protestations, had not the power and the will to reject a proposal. Once the British Resident was installed in the capital city of the State, things were bound to become more complicated. The Resident became the second centre of power. Also see *Imperialist Maneuvers in Kashmir 1846- 1946*, N.N. Raina, Link Publications, New Delhi.

and harassing him. It was to harm the tutelage of the Maharaja. Be it the Muslim Conference or the Yuvak Sabha or any other organization, as long as it raised a voice against the Maharaja, it received covert encouragement from the British agents. It is true that ordinary people of Kashmir were subjected to oppression in the autocratic regime of the Maharaja but that did not mean that the British had a soft corner for the masses of Kashmiri people. On the contrary, by widening and intensifying their interference in the internal affairs of Kashmir, they strove to strengthen their colonial rule in the sub-continent. This precisely was the reason for overthrowing King Amanullah Khan¹ in Kabul.

As a Yuvak Sabha activist

After 1931, I was closely associated with the Yuvak Sabha in its agenda for social reforms and social welfare. However, after the emergence of National Conference, I found that its policy and programmes greatly suited my own thinking and ideals. My association with the Yuvak Sabha was limited to social welfare activities only. For example, I gave my unstinted support to the programme of widow re-marriage and eradication of social evils.² This mission took me to village after village and household after household. I was instrumental in getting many young widows remarried. It was a bold initiative in those days of rigid social customs.¹³ I had even to bear the wrath of my own community members while carrying on the task of social reforms. But I never give

¹Visit www.afghan-web.com

²It should be noted that Kashyapa Bandhu was the foremost among the social reformers of Kashmiri Hindu community. He had been an Arya Samaji activist. He is responsible for introducing the sari as the formal dress of Pandit women replacing the baggy and awkward *pheran*. See also special issue of *Vitasta* dedicated to Kashyapa Bandhu, Calcutta 2004

¹³Amusingly many Pandit families are observing many obsolete traditions, rituals and totems even after their exodus from their birthplace in 1990. The Hinds from Anantnag district are more traditionalists than the rest of them.

in to threats and intimidation. In the villages of Yore Khushipira, Manihil and Trken Wanigam, I had helped some widows get remarried. The interesting thing is that even the priests of Hindu community did not lend me their support in this mission. No priest was prepared to come forward to perform the marriage rites if a Hindu widow wanted to re-marry. They said such a step meant infringement of the tenets of Hindu religion and its tradition. On several occasions, I myself performed the duties of a priest and tied the prospective couples in a bond of matrimonial relationship. The result was that many widows hitherto left to a life of misery and destitution were given a new lease of happy and prosperous life.

Apart from these activities, we organized meetings and rallies on festival days under the banner of Yuvak Sabha and Arya Samaj. In these gatherings we generally appealed to the Hindu community to rid society of bad social customs and the mentality of separation and isolation. Unfortunately, the Pandit society of those days was very conservative. It was ridden with the scourge of casteism. Its members could never think of sharing food with a member of any other community or caste. This isolationist attitude was so deep seated that sometimes the Pandits were not prepared to share food with the Dogras. I distinctly remember that once in Mirhama village, Gobind Singh and Raghunath Singh, two Rajputs¹ arranged an offering (*bavan*). I joined them on this auspicious occasion and shared their food. But when I returned from there, no Pandit of Chawalgam was prepared to talk to me. Everybody looked at me with anger and contempt. According to their philosophy I was an outcast.

¹Some Dogra soldiers who were part of Dogra military establishment decided to settle down in some parts of Anantnag district. The Dogra rulers had allotted them lands, which remained in their possession until the Hindu exodus in 1990.

Let me recount another story. A dispute had surfaced between the two sects of Hindu community, namely Bohras¹ (or Bohoras) and Brahmans. The Bohras wanted to know why the Brahmans refused to dine with them when both the sects adhered to Hindu faith. At the end of the day, the Brahmans told the Bohoras to arrange a prayer and an offering (*yagya*), and that all the Brahmans of Bijbehara would participate in it and partake of the ritual feast. Included in the group of Brahmans was the father of well-known learned Brahman Pandit Prem Nath Shastri.² The people of Bohora community arranged the *yagya* and the priests joined it. They accepted cash and kind as *dakhsbna* or remuneration paid for performing religious rites. But when the time came for eating together, all Brahmans stood up and left the place. This caused serious differences between the two groups. The situation took an ugly turn and the two groups got involved in litigation.

This was the condition of our rigidly conservative society at that point of time. We wanted to rid our people of this ignorance and obstinacy. As an activist of Yuvak Sabha, I attempted to remove this phenomenon of unsociability and retrograde thinking in sections of our community. I tried to impress upon them to accept fraternity and equality as the principles of coexistence. I said that in a society where a poor man struggled endlessly for a two square meal, bad customs and social ills only added to his plight and destitution. Under the banner of Yuvak Sabha and Arya

¹ I am unable to trace the etymology of the word Bahor or Buhur in Kashmiri pronunciation. They were petty shopkeepers men mostly dealing with herbs and medicinal plants. As their business flourished they became grocers and then adopted other trades. It is true and sad that the Pandits (Brahmans) refused to socialize with them.

² He descended from a reputed Brahman family of Bijbehara that commanded respect in the community. The family is now settled at Gol Gujral in Jammu. Pandit Premnath Shastri is the author of Kashmiri *Panchang (jantri)* or the indigenous calendar of the Pandits of Kashmir.

Samaj, I tried to liberate ordinary Kashmir Pandit of a menacing and unbearable burden that had hindered his onward march to prosperity.

As political worker

Alongside this campaign for social reform, I also propagated the ideals of National Conference among my people. I was of firm belief that the agenda chalked out for National Conference at that point of time was the greatest need of the hour. I came into contact with some friends of progressive ideology. Among them I may mention the names of Kashyapa Bandhu, Jialal Kilam, Pran Nath Jalali, Niranjan Nath Raina, Moti Lal Misri, Muhammad Yusuf Dar, Nabeh Ji and others. I found time to discuss with them a variety of current problems and issues. I got many opportunities of being in the association of these intellectuals. As a result, I gravitated towards National Conference. Gradually, I got fully involved in the agenda of this party and then in 1944, I finally withdrew from Yuvak Sabha, Thereafter I became an ardent National Conference activist. The *Naya Kashmir Manifesto* of 1944 is also a reason why I resigned from Yuvak Sabha and joined National Conference. I believed that Naya Kashmir programme was the only way of liberating people from the curse of poverty. This programme envisaged prosperity and progress of all sections of people irrespective of their gender, faith and community. Now I was a committed activist of National Conference.

Apart from political movement, I engaged myself in some social movements as well. Some of these had surfaced even before the freedom movement. One such movement appeared in 1945 with the objective of bringing awareness to the rural people. A conference was organized in Shaleh Khah in Shupiyani with the essential purpose of creating political awareness and unity among the people against social evils that were eating into the body of Hindu society. Besides me, Ram Krishan Ashmuji, Govind Joo Razdan,

Radha Krishan Razdan and Shamboo Nath Bhat Haleem were some of its activists. We gave it the name of Aryan Conference and well-known personalities like Khushal Chand, Mahjoor,¹ Kashyapa Bandhu² and others were invited to attend our deliberations. At that time Ramchand Kak was the Prime Minister of the State and Jiyalal Wanchoo was the *tehsildar* of Shupiyan tehsil. Both of them thought that our movement was against the government. The Muslims contributed lavishly for the conference. But on the appointed day the authorities brought camels and herded them on the very site where we were going to hold the conference. We could not proceed with our programme. We had collected a good amount of money by way of contribution for the conference and had also made purchases of essential things required to make it a success. The amount we had collected still remains deposited in the Jammu and Kashmir Bank.

NC link

It was the year 1946. National Conference organized a huge rally in Shupiyan, which I also addressed. It was the first public rally in which I got an opportunity of delivering a speech. I fully analyzed the pitiable condition of ordinary people and the irresponsible attitude of the autocratic rule. This was the time when Quit Kashmir movement had been launched (May 1946). Rallies and meetings were held to carry the slogan of Quit Kashmir to each village in Kashmir. Some of those rallies are memorable for me. One such rally was organized in Shupiyan and among the speakers were Swarup Nath, Abdul Majid Bandey and I. Swarup Nath, a very

¹Famous Kashmiri poet of Mitrgam.. By profession he was a petty revenue officer (*Patwari*). He remains buried in the vicinity of Athwajan in Srinagar.

²A well-known Pandit social worker, political activist and an Arya Samaji worker Kashyapa Bandhu (Tarachand Bulbul) was a close associate of Sheikh Abdullah in freedom struggle and finally fell out and retired to live a secluded life in his native village Geuru in Anantnag. He is the first Pandit social reformer of contemporary times.

active member of NC, hailed from a business house in Anantnag. He was sent to jail many times in the course of his activities in the movement. Abdul Majid was another leading activist. All the three of us made fiery speeches in the Shupiyan rally. In my address I exposed the exploitative and unjust measures of the autocratic rule. I emphasized the need of having a dispensation based on justice and equality as envisaged in the Naya Kashmir Manifesto.

My speech in this congregation was to become a watershed in my political career. I became a wanted figure with the authorities. Therefore I went underground, which however, did become a serious impediment in carrying forward my political mission. Conversely, I had more time to work with greater zest for the growth and expansion of secular ideology of National Conference. For the freedom fighters the meaning of going underground is abandoning ones home and hearth and other engagements of daily life. All those tasks are impracticable in a state of hiding. But while one is in hiding, one can work exclusively for the movement. In this way one becomes very useful for the success of the movement. While spending my days underground, I worked hard to bring to the people the message of Naya Kashmir and its programme as also the drawbacks of autocratic rule. I took full part in organizational work. I traveled from village to village and from hamlet to hamlet. As a very sincere political worker I disseminated the message of secularism and equality as enshrined in Naya Kashmir Manifesto to broad sections of people around me and assured them of a bright future for Kashmir. I did it all in my humble way. In those days I had full faith in the programmes of Naya Kashmir. I believed that our leadership would very firmly go along this path and raise the destiny of our nation to the heights of glory. I passed the days of my hiding in different villages like Hushangpora, Liter, Darbagh, Kashevah, and Pargochi in Anantnag district explaining and debating the aims and objectives of National Conference.

During that period I met several times with Ghulam Mohiuddin Qara¹, who was responsible for running the underground chapter of Quit Kashmir movement. I would often exchange ideas with him on the ways and methods of work of the organization. These meetings were held in secrecy. I had also established links with Vidhyalal Paragochi, Motilal Misri, and Abdul Aziz Peer. We all used to report to the party leadership about the reaction of the masses of people towards the movement.

The autocratic regime had decided to arrest the activists on a large scale. Prisons were packed with detenues. People were subjected to torture; they were threatened and harassed in order to break the movement. Sometimes, political prisoners were manhandled. The regime wanted that people should get scared and thus disown or dissociate with the movement. But the masses of people had great sympathy with us. They had understood that the only effective remedy of their political and economic deprivation lay in freedom from autocratic rule. They dreamed of a beautiful future, of prosperity and of happiness. We had dedicated our lives to uphold their beautiful dreams and shining expectations. People from all sections of society had joined the Quit Kashmir movement. Time and again, the autocratic regime had tried to create a division among the people. It wanted a confrontation between the Hindus and the Muslims. Therefore it covertly encouraged the Muslim Conference as well, which had the plans of forging communal division so that the majority community would be induced to follow its line (of communal politics). As against this (machination), the NC wanted to carry all communities with it and it spoke about total change. It was contemplating creation of a civil society that did not accept discrimination on any count. It envisaged a

¹Later on Qara left National Conference and joined Muslim Conference. He led the group of Kashmiris who opposed the accession of the state to Indian Union in 1947.

society in which there was no concept of the high and the low. Majority of rural population of Kashmir subscribed to this ideology because they had the bitter and long experience of oppression under an autocratic regime.

It was perhaps November 1946. Quit Kashmir movement was at its peak. To carrying the movement forward, its leaders were courting arrest. Before surrendering to the police, these leaders generally addressed public rallies at Khanqah-e Mualla¹, Srinagar and some more places. Such rallies would occasionally be held at *Dargah* in Hazratbal. A massive rally was organised at Khanqah-e Mulla, Srinagar. The regime of the day tried to project our secular movement as a war of the Muslims against a Hindu ruler. But the truth is that it was not a movement of the Muslims only: it was a movement supported and run by the poor people of the State drawn drawn from all religions and different walks of life. It was their movement to liberate the people and their land and to bring them prosperity and freedom from want and from oppression.

To Central jail

I also participated in the rally at Khanqah-e Mualla. In my speech to a crowd of over twelve thousand people I presented a sketch of the backwardness in which Kashmir and her people lived their miserable lives. I urged the audience to remain united and work for the reconstruction of the State irrespective of their religion, faith, community or ethnicity. I distinctly remember that in my speech I fully explained our states backwardness in the field of education. I compared the life expectancy and health status of our

¹Originally the site of Kali temple situated at Fateh Kadal in Srinagar. Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani, the Iranian Muslim missionary of late 14th century A.D. had converted it into a hospice and raised a platform from where he delivered sermons to the newly converts to Islamic faith in Srinagar
See *Baharistan-i-Shahi* by Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani

people with the rest of the world and fully analyzed the distressing effects of poverty and ignorance. As soon as I finished my speech, the police arrested me and threw me in the Maharaj Ganj¹ police lockout for one night. Next day I was produced in a court of law with my hands in fetters. Sometimes later, the court pronounced its verdict and awarded me six months imprisonment and a fine of two hundred rupees for fomenting rebellion. The verdict having been pronounced, I was taken to Srinagar Central Jail.

This prison was packed with freedom fighters. Here I met with many top leaders of National Conference and the freedom movement. I can name Maulana Muhammad Saeed Masudi², Sardar Budh Singh, Niranjan Nath Raina³, Jiyalal

¹Situated in the locality of Zaina Kadal in downtown Srinagar, Maharaj Ganj was the hub of commercial activity at that time.

²The veteran NC leader and also its General Secretary was gunned down by the terrorists at an advanced age of 90 in his home in Bihama, Ganderbal. He was also the chief editor of NC official paper *Kbidmat*. In an exclusive and private interview to this translator in 1979 at his residence in Bihama, I asked Maulana Masu'di some questions about the dismissal of Sheikh Abdullah in 1953. He made a stunning revelation. This is what he said: "Sometime after the dismissal and arrest of Sheikh Abdullah on August 9, 1953, I met with Pandit Nehru in New Delhi and asked him why he had agreed to the arrest of the Sheikh. At this, Nehru went into a deep introspective mood for a few minutes. Then raising his head he looked at me. I could see sorrow writ large on his face. Then in a low voice he said: Sheikh Sahib has thrust a dagger into my back. And with that tears rolled down his cheek."

³The most outstanding communist leader of Kashmir who fled Kashmir in 1950 when the Union government cracked down on the communists in India. He spent nearly twelve years in London and finally returned to Kashmir in early 1962 to become the Head of the Department of Physics. He was the intellectual powerhouse of the progressive wing of NC, and was also made the District NC Committee Secretary for some time. He is reported to have declined the offer of Pandit Nehru to be his private secretary. He had suggested the name of Dwarkanath Kachroo as private secretary to Nehru. Raina was a rare intellectual of highest integrity and vision. Like many other stalwarts he, too, was disillusioned with the NC leadership in his later life. He is the author of *Imperialist Manoeuvres in Kashmir 1846 – 1947*. From my personal knowledge, I would like to record that not B.P.L. and

Tamiri¹, and Hakim Muhiud-din among them. I think I had the first and the last meeting with Maqbul Sherwani² in the same prison. The theme of my speech at Khanqah-e Mulla in which I had mentioned of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs all stuck up in the morass of poverty under the coercion of autocratic rule had created an impression on the inmates of the jail. The theme of my speech was making rounds among them.

Freedom fighters were locked up in Ward 7 of the Central Jail. Comrades in the jail would occasionally ask me to make speeches before them. I still retain some faint idea of the themes I dealt with in those speeches. In one speech, I had referred to the theme of equality, unity and sustained struggle as found in the verses of *Rig Veda*. I had very effectively applied those teachings to the freedom movement. When I explained this *mantra* (verse) of the concluding *mandal* (chapter) of *Rig Veda*: "*sam ghachadam, sam vadadam, sam vomanase janatam, deva bhagham yatha purve sanjananam upaste*" (go together, talk together, your minds be one, as the angels worked in earlier day, work like that) and interpreted it in the context of our freedom struggle, the audience was greatly impressed. In yet another speech, I had laid stress on unanimous thinking, unanimous action and taking recourse to

...Freda Bedi, but N.N. Raina was the person who had drafted the blue print of the historical document called *Naya Kashmir Manifesto*. In his book *Tragedy in Kashmir*, Joseph Korbel pointedly makes a mention of him.

¹A Labour Union leader originally from Rainawari, Srinagar Jia Lal Sadhu was a petty contractor who got deeply interested in the affairs of labour unions. He was very popular with labour force in various private concerns in Kashmir like the Silk Factory in Srinagar or the Matches Factory in Baramulla and Lasjan.

²A firebrand NC youth leader of Baramulla who had disrupted the rally in Baramulla, which M.A. Jinnah was addressing during his visit to the valley in 1946. Sherwani is reported to have misled the tribesmen who invaded and captured Baramulla in October 1947 thus causing a delay of two days in their march on to Srinagar. Finally, the invaders captured him, nailed him to a wall outside a cinema hall in Baramulla and shot him dead.

bravery. I quoted this Sanskrit *shaloka* (verse) “*sahna avato, sahnabunakto, saba veryam kavvavahe tejasna vjetanasto ma vidishavahay*” meaning “go together, eat together, show your bravery together, let your learning shed light around and do not hate.” I thoroughly explained these verses exhorting the listeners to walk the path of truth in order to arrive at the pious destination of freedom. After delivering this speech, late Maulana Masudi¹ came to me and patted me on my back. He greatly appreciated my words and encouraged me.

The hindsight convinces me that the period of my internment in the Central jail was not without a benefit to me. I found an opportunity of reading many useful books in addition to political literature. I also got the opportunity of exchanging ideas with many prisoner-comrades, and acquired from them the scientific views on various social and political matters. Among the good works that I read were the *Socialist Sixth of World* authored by the Dean of Canterbury, *The Glimpses of World History* by Jawaharlal Nehru, and *Vigyantik Bhavtik Vad and Nae Bharat ke Nae Neta* by Rahul Sankrityayan. I also studied the writings of Subhash Chandra Bose. I always considered him the foremost soldier in India's struggle for freedom. He wanted to raise the people from the depths of poverty and set them free from the fetters of colonial slavery. Outside the jail, one seldom gets time to

¹Maulana Muhammad Saeed Masu'di was a polished scholar of Persian, Arabic and Urdu. He was appointed as Lecturer in Persian in J&K Government but left the job and joined NC and the freedom movement. He was a man of letters and became the editor of NC official organ *Khidmat*. He rose to be the Secretary of NC and wielded much power and influence. He is considered one of the three most outstanding figures of NC, the other two being Sheikh Abdullah and Mirza Afzal Baig. Owing to some differences with Sheikh Abdullah, he left NC in 1974 and joined Janata Party and became its chief of J&K branch. With the decline of Janata Party, the Maulana retired to private life and lived the rest of his days in his private house at Bihama near Ganderbal. The armed insurgents gunned him down in 1990 when he had crossed the age of 90.

make intensive and extensive reading. The life of a political activist was full of various complications. I was no exception.

In 1945, my father passed away. With that the burden of the household fell on my shoulders. Petty farming was the only source of income for my family. But it needed hard labour and time. I had dedicated myself to the freedom struggle. I had no time to attend to my peasantry. The family somehow survived under immense stress of poverty. I struggled hard not to let poverty and destitution become a roadblock in the path, which I had chosen for myself.

I have said that the Khanqah-e Mualla speech earned me imprisonment and two hundred rupees fine. This was a huge amount absolutely impossible for me, a poor and penniless man to afford. I did not beg from anybody. There were kids in the family, and we had kept a cow to provide milk for them. I had to sell the cow to pay the fine. This deprived the kids of milk and naturally their physical growth was adversely affected for want of proper nourishment. The sale of the cow did not get me the full amount of fine. As such, I disposed off some household goods and some trees to raise the full amount of fine.

Out of prison

Released from prison, I started taking more active part in freedom movement. In cooperation with my comrades, I launched a programme of introducing Naya Kashmir plan to people in far-flung areas of Budgam, Kulgam and Anantnag districts. This included meetings attended by large numbers of people. At times I participated in political activities in Jammu, too, on behest of outstanding revolutionary and popular leader Comrade Dhanvantari.¹

I was working for the movement with great dedication though I was faced with many serious problems on my home

¹He was one among the closest associates of Bhagat Singh.

front. What gave me courage and strength to face all those difficulties was the satisfaction that we had put everything at stake for a very noble and a great cause viz. freedom, democracy and secularism.

5. Post-Independence Years

Part I

At last great sacrifices made by hundreds of thousands of Indian freedom fighters brought us to the cherished goal and on August 15, 1947. India won her freedom from colonial rule. However, we had to pay a heavy price for this freedom. The country was divided. A new state by the name of Pakistan was carved out of the body of Hindustan.

Impending political landscape of the State of Jammu and Kashmir preceding India's independence was not clear. In a sense it was heading towards explosion. For about a year, skirmishes continued to take place on the Punjab border.¹ The fact is that 15th August 1947 did not bring really happy tidings for Kashmir because the State continued to reel under an autocratic regime. However, people felt emboldened and their determination was strong. It was evident that autocratic rule had to come to an end very soon. At this time brisk movement of the British officials, Congress and other political party leaders and representatives was to be noticed in the valley. Two names among the visitors are outstanding; Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The nascent State of Pakistan was coveting Kashmir. Muhammad Ali Jinnah also visited Kashmir and held talks with Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah. He returned to Pakistan after the talks

¹Particularly ex-soldiers from Mirpur area — disbanded after the WW II came to a close — had become restive and threatened armed insurgency against the regime of the Maharaja in Srinagar.

broke down.¹ Maharaja Hari Singh had ordered detention of Nehru near Kohala and thus he was prevented from entering the valley.² This uncertain and unclear state of affairs continued almost for one year.

It was October 1947. I had been resting in my home at Zainapora for some days. One fine morning, Nur Muhammad Dar, Muhammad Abdullah Punnu and Ghulam Nabi, all political activists came to my place. They told me about the departure of the Maharaja and the incursion of tribesmen on Muzaffarabad and the resultant killing, loot and arson that followed the collapse of civil administration. Such incidents did take place on the border even during normal times and we had almost become used to hearing the sordid stories in this context. But the sudden departure of the Maharaja was something astonishing. All of us began pondering over the question "What now?"

Incursion of Frontier Tribesmen

More activists visited me in the day. An atmosphere of suspense prevailed in the air. People seemed scared and terrified. Only a few days earlier, I had visited Srinagar and in the company of Raj Bans, who had stayed in Kashmir during the Quit Kashmir movement, I had met with Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah at Saura³. We asked him about the news and views that were brought to us every day. He could not give us any satisfactory answer. We asked him about the chaos that prevailed in Muzafarabad. As far as I can remember, he just avoided making any direct comment. All that he said was that because of the running away of Scott,

¹In reply to a question put to him by a media person, Jinnah is reported to have said, "Kashmir is in my pocket".

²NC has blown this event out of proportion only to paint the Maharja in darkest colours. A dispassionate student of history is advised to read the correspondence between the Maharaja and the Vicoy and Patel in regard to this event.

³Sheikh Abdullah's ancestral locality in downtown Srinagar.

the Police Chief, chaos and confusion had overtaken the people. Another British officer named Powell, too, had left the valley. Departure of the British officers had given rise to a state of fear and uncertainty and it gave grist to rumour mongering. In short the Sheikh alerted us against those who spread rumours and advised us to impress upon the people to remain united so that we were able to resist the enemy.

NC closes ranks

Pakistan sponsored and abetted an attack of the tribesmen of NWFP on Kashmir. She attempted the conquest of Kashmir through the sword of religious zealotry. National Conference rose to the occasion, united the people and resolved to resist the invading forces. The slogans raised by the Kashmiris at that time ran like this:

Hamleh awar khabardar

Ham Kashmiri hain tayyar

Kashmir banega Naya Kashmir

Nazim Aala Sheri Kashmir

(Beware invaders; we the people of Kashmir are ready to meet your challenge. Kashmir will be made Naya Kashmir and Sher-i-Kashmir (Sheikh Abdullah) will be the chief administrator.)

NC activists were busy in meeting people everywhere and urging them to maintain fraternity and cordial human relations. The Indian troops took on the enemy. However it was also necessary to plan safeguards against internal disorder. The enemy was from outside as well as from inside. There were anti-social elements and miscreants waiting on the sidelines to indulge in disruptive activities.

Ghulam Muhammad Punnu, Nuru d-din Dar, Ghulam Nabi and I began to organize a series of rallies in our area and unite people in a big way. We began to draw our people out of confusion because owing to the departure of the Maharaja, entire administrative machinery had collapsed. It had

become difficult to know who is what. Numerous elements surfaced at that time calling themselves administrative officials. We tried to educate people about the situation and protect them against fraudulent persons. I can recollect many incidents of those days.

One such case pertains to a peasant of Rishipora, Zainapora. In a case pertaining to the marriage of the daughter of a peasant, the High Courts verdict was that the girl was a minor. Therefore the marriage was declared null and void. A miscreant interfering in the matter had handed out threats to the girl and her parents. He had made the parents believe that he was some important government functionary and that no verdict of the court could be implemented without his signature. At that time the administration had appointed emergency officers who were entrusted with the responsibility of keeping an eye on law and order situation in their respective areas. This imposter had introduced himself as an emergency officer. He had frightened the people to the extent of telling them that he could order bombardment of fifteen villages at a time.

In another incident an old woman had the only son who happened to be lame by one leg. An impostor posing as army recruiting officer scared the old woman announcing that he was going to recruit her son and send him to the war front. The petrified old woman begged him to spare his lame son and offered a fowl by way of bribe to get rid of the impostor. A person from Hushangpora in Bijbehara, posing as an officer, would affix a false stamp on the applications of the poor people and collect money from them. The administration had collapsed and total chaos prevailed. People were looted in these chaotic conditions. Many charlatans carried out such despicable activities. When we appeared on the scene, they took to their heels.

People felt insecure; government machinery was out of gear. I had many opportunities of moving from place to place, holding meetings and knowing the actual condition of the people. I used to alert them against miscreants. Along

with other sincere workers of NC, I arranged rallies in Zainapora, Fresal, Bijbehara, Rebban Gund Bahram, Litar, Keler, Pulwama, Achhan, Damhal Hanjipora, Khari Batpora, Tsemar, Narvav, Nagam, Kulgam etc. In these rallies Hindu-Muslim unity was the main theme to be conveyed to the audience. We told people to disable the conspiracy of exploitative forces and intruders. The people had great hopes in National Conference and gave full support to the organization.

People wanted to uphold the age-old tradition of spiritual teachings of Laleh Arifah (Laleshwari – *translator*) and Nund Rishi. They were prepared to make sacrifices for their nation and their motherland. Martyrdom of Maqbul Sherwani and Pushkar Nath Zadu was infusing new spirit of freedom into the veins of the people. In Doda, Som Nath Bira had sacrificed his life for his nation. He had thus protected the principles that emerge from fraternity and unity among the people. Their sacrifice was an encouragement of the struggle against oppressive forces that intended to enslave the people to hatred, pessimism and remorselessness.¹

¹The translator has many reservations in accepting the contents of this paragraph. Replacing Laleshwari by Laleh Arifa is unacceptable. Nund Rishi is a very confusing and controversial figure. His role is highly debatable. Addressing a public rally at Safa Kadal on April 2, 2007, Hurriyat hardliner Ali Shah Geelani declared that there was no person by the name of Nund Rishi. It was Shaykhul-Alam Nuru'd-Din Noorani, a staunch orthodox Sunni Muslim missionary who was not at all either a *Rishi* or a *Sufi*. If Zadu and Bira, two Pandit secular activists had earned any respect and regard from the NC leadership for their great sacrifices, then Sheikh Abdullah should not have in his biography *Atish-e-China* branded all Kashmiri Pandits as Indian spies. There is not a single monument, road or installation in Kashmir named after either Zadu or Bira just as we have an avenue named after Sherwani. NC leaders often speak of Bira in their public speeches not to eulogize him and remember his sacrifice but to highlight the presence of "Hindu communalists" in Doda district. Never was a remembrance meeting held by National Conference or any other organization to pay tribute either to Zadu or to Bira. Their names do not figure anywhere in contemporary Kashmir history.

Organized resistance

An organization in Srinagar worked on cultural front. It performed dramas on stages to caution Kashmiris against the invaders. They exhorted people to remain united in order to fight the invading tribesmen. These programmes were meant to highlight the importance of the traditions of Kashmiriyyat.¹ The stage reflected the brutal attack of the invaders and also demonstrated many a heart-rending episodes so that the people were induced to protect their pious motherland from enslavement and from destruction of her rich cultural heritage. In these rallies spirited and passionate verses of revolutionary poets like Abdul Ahad Azad, Mahjoor and Dinanath Nadim used to be recited. Among the people at cultural front were Dina Nath Nadim, Somnath Zutshi, Sheila Bhatia, Zeynab Begum, Usha, Abdul Ghani Namtahali, Nur Muhammad Roshan, and Amin Kamil.²

¹Kashmiriyat is a highly controversial term. It has different meaning for different people. A majority of people in Kashmir calls Kashmiriyat the gentle and soft face of Hindu-Muslim unity. But there are others who argue that Kashmiriyat is a term meant to mislead ordinary people into thinking that there has been fraternity among the Hindus and Muslims of Kashmir. The fact is that the minority community of Hindus in Kashmir had no option but to surrender to the diktat of the majority against their will without being able to make any protestation. If this is Kashmiriyat, then it is open oppression and suppression of a small religious minority by the majority. (Translator). My understanding is that atrocities perpetrated against the Hindu religious minority for centuries in the past are camouflaged under Kashmiriyat in order to create a false impression that Kashmiri majority community has always been tolerant towards its Hindu minority.

²This translator has strong reservations in accepting the statement that communal harmony had been forged in Kashmir to resist the invading tribesmen. Nobody in or outside NC has ever said anything about atrocities committed against the Hindus and Sikhs of Muzaffarabad and Baramulla districts. Baramulla remained under the occupation of the invading hordes for nearly two weeks from October 27, 1947. It were mainly the locals who resorted to loot, arson and killing of the minority community members (Hindus and Sikhs) and who became guides for the invading ...

Although invaders had captured Muzaffarabad and were advancing, yet the morale of the people was high¹ for they were infused with self respect, fraternal sentiment and the dream of a bright future based on Naya Kashmir agenda. In one of his speeches at Pathar Masjid, Srinagar, Sheikh Abdullah said that the borders of the beautiful valley of Kashmir touched on the borders of five countries, Hindustan, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and Russia. State's income was very limited while its border was spread out over thousands of miles. How was it possible to protect such a long border with very limited resources in order to protect our freedom and continue with Naya Kashmir programmes? The Sheikh rejected Prime Minister Ramchand Kak's plan of independent Kashmir² arguing that the States borders were extensive and their protection was difficult. Secondly, it may not be totally impossible to maintain the freedom with much limited economic resources but it certainly was very difficult. Therefore, in order to implement the agenda of Naya Kashmir, it was unavoidable to hold on to democratic values. Since India was emerging as a democratic force, it was

... hordes.(translator's comments). The history of the siege and fall of Baramulla in October 1947 is yet to be written. And if somebody takes up the project in right earnest, it will shed new light on so-called Hindu-Muslim unity in Kashmir.

¹This is far from truth and reflects the patent propaganda of NC. Horrendous stories of murder, loot, pillage and molestation of women related by the Hindu and Sikh refugees who were hounded out from Muzaffarabad, Uri, Baramulla, Sopor, Handwara, Kupwara, Sumbal and Pattan towns by local brigands and felons explodes the myth of communal harmony. Wherever Local gangsters torched the buildings and shops over which they found NC flag fluttering and razed it to ground. Since Anantnag was not affected by the tribal attack, the author seems not to have cared to know what was the fate of the minority communities of Hindus and Sikhs in the districts and tehsils that fell into the hands of the incursionists. Many Sikhs were massacred at Nala Ningal near Sopor and their young women kidnapped. The locals were the main accomplices in this perfidy.

²Kak, who was castigated and humiliated by the Sheikh after becoming Chief Administrator in October 1947, now stands strongly vindicated. Kashmiri separatist leaders say that they have so far given the sacrifice of ...

natural for the NC to accede to democratic India and then carry on the programme of democratization. This is why the Sheikh rejected separate political existence for the State and considered accession to India genuine and necessary for the security of the State.¹

Accession

With sacrifices made by brave Indian soldiers and the people of the State, Pakistan — sponsored invasion of Kashmir by the tribesmen was repulsed. This hastened the liquidation of the Maharaja's autocratic rule. Sheikh Sahib and his colleagues assumed the governing authority and in his first stint he became Chief Administrator of the State. Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq and Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad ran the emergency administration. In the district of Anantnag, Mirza Muhammad Afzal Baig, ran emergency administration. District Baramulla was placed under the administrative command of Sufi Akbar. In this way a long era of slavery was brought to an end. Sincere workers now waited for translating our dreams of a golden future into reality.

... over a hundred thousand youth for *aazaadi* (freedom). The old and Indianised Kashmiri Pandit lobby in Delhi and Allahabad spit out much more venom against Ramchand Kak than did the Sheikh. They never tolerated an indigenous Pandit of humble origin like Ramchand Kak rise to the heights of political power in Kashmir. Furthermore, the Sheikh at one time was not averse to the partition of Kashmir along Communal lines. See his letter to Col. Naser of Egypt. (*Annex. III*).

¹This again is an erroneous statement. Months before the armed incursion of the tribesmen took place, the Sheikh had despatched a high - power delegation of NC under the leadership of Sadiq to Jinnah saying that NC would accept State's accession to Pakistan provided some of its conditions were met. Jinnah refused conditional accession. Was the Muslim League, which became the ruling party in Pakistan, secular and democratic? What had become of NC's much hyped slogan of "*Sher-i-Kashmir ka kya irshad/Hindu, Muslim, Sikh ettebad?*" And how was the Sheikh going to manage the affairs when in 1949 he threatened to withdraw State's accession to Indian Union if the Indian Constituent Assembly did not agree to incorporate special status and Article 370 in the Indian Constitution. If New Delhi had not accepted, how was the Sheikh going to defend several thousand mile long border of the State? (*Translator's comment*)

Part II

Hopes Frustrated: Post – 1948

Tribesmen repulsed

After repulsing the attack of tribal hordes, and the reins of the government passing into the hands of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, the era of realization of our dreams after a long struggle was ushered in. I still found myself pre-occupied with sincere and tireless organizational work. In 1949, I was made a member of the General Council of NC. I was also the NC President of my area (*balqa*). A year later in 1950, I was made a member of Debt Cancellation Board constituted for the tehsils of Srinagar, Anantnag, Pulwama and Kulgam. All these tehsils (sub-districts) were assigned to me. Other members of this board were Shambhoo Nath, the lawyer of Kulgam, Khwajah Ghulam Muhammad Mir of Salar and Ghulam Nabi Nayak (only for some time).

Debt Cancellation Board

After the NC regime came to power, a process of reforms was initiated. It has already been said that Kashmir peasantry was reeling under the burden of debt in those days. Moneylenders were charging compound interest from them. As they gave no receipts for the small installments, which the peasant debtors paid to liquidate the loan, they were left free to cheat and fleece the peasants in debt. In many cases the loan continued to be repaid by the second generation of the debtor. The Debt Cancellation Board settled a total of nine million rupees of loan amounts between the borrowers and the lenders. Thus even when there was no dependable witness or cognizable receipt of part payment with the debtor and also in spite of the lender producing a document wherein the debtor had undertaken to pay one and a half times the actual amount of the debt, we in the Debt

Cancellation Board cancelled the full amount of loan given to the peasant. Thousands of debtors were thus liberated from the clutches of moneylenders and usurers.

Sense of dedication

We were enthused with dedication and zeal for social reforms in those days and attached great importance to these assignments rather than craving for positions of power. It is true that unlike today, there was much less political interference at that time. The Board worked independently without any interference. Nobody could influence our decisions. The sole objective of the Board was the welfare of poor peasants. Members of the Board dispensed justice with great sense of honesty. There was not an iota of corruption and bribery in those days. And if there was any, we in the Board were far far away from that evil. We had distanced ourselves from material greed. With Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah as our leader, we wanted to see the light of Naya Kashmir in our dark surrounding.

A hope and a desire kept our dreams emblazed. We had become used to it during our long freedom struggle. We had realized that we could win the hearts of the people by banishing corruption, bribery and oppression against the poor and famished people. We lived with them, were part of them and we were a witness to and a victim of the tyranny of an autocratic regime. However, it is true that some people, who had been the victims of autocratic regime like their compatriots, began to behave like rulers. They gradually adopted the same attitude that their predecessors had adopted.¹

Food crisis

1950 and 1951 were very unfavourable years for the

¹Should a reader presume that ideological training of NC cadres was only superficial?

peasantry in Kashmir. Agricultural production met with a shortfall during these two years, and the valley was faced with food shortage. Popular government now at the helm of affairs failed to handle the situation. In stead of providing relief to the peasants, the administration adopted such repressive measures as to revive the memory of the days of autocracy. People began to feel disenchanted with the National Conference. They were greatly resentful of Mirza Afzal Baig, the Revenue Minister in Sheikh Abdullahs cabinet. NC workers were also among the disgruntled lot. Once he had to run away from a rally when he was faced with criticism from the public. The peasants were fed up with governments method of procurement (*mujwazah*).¹ Green pastures, about which the leaders of freedom struggle, had been speaking about so vigorously seemed nothing but a mirage.

However, notwithstanding this state of affairs, many NC activists showed remarkable fortitude and patience and I stood with them. We felt that there was the need of creating a platform within the party through which the grievances of the peasants could be brought to the notice of the government and its attention could be diverted to the problems of the peasantry. In 1949 a committee by the name Kisan Committee (Peasants Committee) was formed. Its members were Abdul Ghani Trali, Abdu r-Rahman Rahat, Damoodar Hanjoora, Moti Lal Misri and I. Its meetings took place at various places like Sangren (Shupiyan) Tulkhun, Lawveypora, Chak Rais, Shupiyan, Parigam and Pulwama. We used to go to the peasants and persuade them to ask the government to bring about agrarian reforms in order to put an end to feudal system. We encouraged them to pressurize the

¹ *mujwazah* meant the quantum of food grains (essentially paddy) levied according to the total land area brought under paddy cultivation. The peasants were required to deposit the quantity of levy in the nearest grainaries and obtain a clearance certificate from the officer in charge. It was almost an arbitrary system.

government to develop irrigation system and provide better seeds to the peasants so that agrarian output could be increased. These were not just our ideas that we wanted to disseminate; these in fact were the guidelines set forth in Naya Kashmir Manifesto. It had promised to put an end to tenancy and to make tenants owners of the land they tilled. Kisan Committee invited the attention of the peasants and the government to this ground situation.

At last, the popular government implemented agrarian reforms. According to these reforms the following formula was adopted:

Proprietorship up to 100 kanals	- half of total landed property to go into the ownership of the tenant on half the price
100 to 182 kanals	- one-fourth of total land to go into the ownership of tenant against one fourth of price
Above 182 kanals	- without any compensation

The government constituted the Land Reforms Committee in April 1949. Its task was to put an end to landlordism and transfer the ownership of the land to its tillers. But before the committee submitted its report and recommendations, Sheikh Abdullah announced agrarian reforms in a public rally. This was the first historical and revolutionary step after we had won freedom. A large number of landless peasants became the owners of land. Prior to this reform, the peasants were at the mercy of landlords. No more was the peasant to sweat for the landlord. Evidently, Sheikh Abdullah opened a new chapter of development and progress in Kashmir. No doubt, there were some deficiencies and lacunae in these reforms and at times one felt that the step had been taken in haste yet notwithstanding all that, Sheikh Abdullah made a lasting place for himself in the minds of the peasantry in the State of

Jammu and Kashmir. Those who were nothing more than paupers became the owners of landed property overnight. This is a unique example of social justice in the whole of India.¹

Levy on paddy yield

One more issue staring into the face of the peasants was of levy, technically called *mujwaza*. Levy was imposed according to land acreage. The acquired quantity of paddy was stocked and then rationed to the dwellers in cities and towns. The mode of imposing levy was the same that existed under landlordism. The levy did not take into account how much paddy was to be procured from a peasant, and what was the status of the land or the needs of the peasant. Paddy was procured from small as well as large-scale holders. A peasant whose land yield did not suffice his needs beyond three months had to surrender a portion of the yield while a prosperous landowner with more than 12 months of stock in his granary, too, had to surrender paddy to the revenue officials. No discrimination was made between the haves and have-nots. Normally grains should have been procured from big landholders and stock holders; small scale holders and petty peasants should not have been forced to part with their small yield in the name of levy that did not suffice their own needs.

Yet one more anomaly was that paddy was procured even from a village which had deficit produce. It was unjust that in order to meet the food requirements of prosperous and well-to-do denizen of cities and towns, the poor and starving peasants in the villages were taxed and thus made poorer. True, that in procurement system, the peasant was paid a

¹There are reports that on sensing that land reform were in the offing, most Muslim landlords of the valley in connivance with local revenue officials manipulated distribution and fragmentation of their excessive holdings among their progeny and in this way hoodwinked the impact of land reforms.

small amount in advance to help him in his agrarian pursuit. But generally, the peasants paid that money back to the government as land revenue. It was blatant and unbearable exploitation of almost entire peasantry of the State. The petty peasants could hardly produce five or six months of food requirements from their land. But when a portion from this meager produce had to be surrendered to the government, it naturally resulted in deepening of food crisis. In order to sustain their family for the remaining six months of the year, they were forced to approach the stockholders and lenders of grains on interest (*vadi dares*)¹. The rate of interest was unbearable for the peasants.

Procurement

Apart from levy, the government collected paddy from the peasants under another scheme called "procurement." This scheme also made no distinction between the big and the small landholders. What actually happened was that paddy was procured not from those landholders and stockists who had surplus but from poor peasants who were already faced with deficit in their own needs.

An embarrassing situation was created by corruption and bribery rampant among revenue officials deployed on procurement job. They revived the oppression of the peasants precisely in a way in which landlords were doing. It appeared as if despite the rising sun of freedom, darkness still enveloped our peasants. Had things really changed for them? Under people's government, wrong ways and methods of imposing levy and procurement became more all-inclusive. Ordinary people were knowingly forced to adopt a wrong political direction. In the Narvaw area of Kulgam tehsil, most of the people were facing food shortage. With the installation

¹ Grain merchants gave the peasants grains on loan and made them promise to return the grains within a stipulated period of time along with interests in kind and not in cash. He was called *ved dar*. This was as oppressive a practice as usury was.

of peoples government not only paddy but corn and wheat, too, were brought under procurement scheme. This exacerbated the distress of the masses of people. The reason advanced for promulgating this black law was that it was necessary for maintaining regular supply of food grains to the urban population. Was the peoples government meant to care for the urban population only and not to listen to the woes of the rural populace?¹

The method of collecting levy was tyrannical and oppressive. A peasant who delayed depositing the grains in time was punished with "*tiktiki*"² in local terminology. It was clear that the new political arrangement was much more tyrannical and inhuman than that under autocratic regime. The picture of Naya Kashmir projected by the NC leader Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah now appeared dark and hazy to the peasants. They asked if that was the sun of freedom, which they had envisaged to rise while they groaned in the darkness of a long and dreary night of slavery. We were embarrassed because we suspected that the government had deviated from the goals for which we had made sacrifices to run the movement for freedom.

Dayalgam peasant movement

Suffering and torment to which Kashmir peasantry was subjected in post-freedom period was in no way different from the one it had faced in pre-freedom era. During the autocratic regime, the peasants at many places had raised their voice remonstrating that the administration cared only for the urban sector. It will be reminded that sometime before the dawn of freedom a strong peasant movement had

¹Owing to shortage and mismanagement of paddy supplies, Sheikh's administration supplied potatoes to the consumers, which ultimately won him the sobriquet of "Olav Bub" meaning something like 'Potato Patriarch'.

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surfaced in Dyalgam, Anantanag. Abdu s-Salam Yatoo, Habibullah and others were at its forefront. The peasant movement became too strong in South Kashmir to unnerve even the cadres of National Conference. They considered it a rival movement threatening their existence. Many a time, NC leadership at various levels tried to discourage and wipe out the peasant movement¹ but without much success. Once Mirza Muhammad Afzal Baig, (Revenue Minis) was addressing a peasant rally in South Kashmir. When he began speaking against the peasant movement, a girl jumped onto the stage and put a traditional Kashmiri womans headgear (*qasaba*) on his head. This incident became the catalyst for a local poet to compose the satirical verse

Qasaba hat ke badley

Diya debqan zadi ne

Government turns deaf ear

The Peasant Commttee (Kisan Committee) formed after the inception of popular government also aimed at bringing awareness to the peanuts about their rights. We worked hard to collect peasants at various places to protest against the wrong ways of procurement and against doing injustice to peasantry. The government turned a deaf ear to these complaints. In Devsar, Kulgam, a peasant named Karim Wagay led one such protest rally. But the government refused to move.

I personally brought this desperate situation of the peasants to the notice of Mirza Muhammad Afzal Baig several times, stressing on the need of reforming the levy and procurement operation system. I made many suggestions of eradicating bribery and corruption in the system and dissuading people from harbouring misconceptions against

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National Conference. I proposed that grains procured from poor peasants without taking into account their income and needs, should actually be obtained from big landholders and grain stockists/hoarders. This would stop callous and injudicious procurement campaign, and the peasantry would have a sigh of relief. I added that in doing so the peasant would be spared the coercion and bullying by corrupt officials and functionaries of revenue and cooperative agencies. My plea to the Revenue Minister and the district NC leader, Afzal Beig was that if these suggestions were accepted, it would help in collecting sufficient food grains and secondly people gradually getting disenchanted with National Conference would return to the fold.

Atrocious

I was simply stunned and shocked by the reply and reasoning of Mirza Afzal Baig. He said that some poor people in villages were reported to be storing the paddy of big grain merchants in their granaries in order to keep it away from the sight of revenue functionaries. He said that this had forced the government to procure paddy from the well-to-do as well as poor landholders and peasants on a uniform basis. I had told him that most of the villagers were faced with scarcity of food grains from the month of June or July till the time of harvesting. This made them buy foodgrains from the stockholders on a higher price. I had suggested that the needy peasants be provided foodgrains from the procured stocks for three months of June, July and August. This would save poor peasants from exploitation by the hoarders. I said this would also plug the possibility of some of the peasants willing to hide the stocks of the hoarders.

I put before him several cases in which we had made an experiment with this option. For example, in Hashangpora and Alsipora it were the people who had given a clue to the stocks hoarded by grain merchants. The result was that the government could procure more paddy than what it had estimated for that area.

Beig was not disposed to listen to what we pleaded for. We were trying to wipe the tears from the eyes of suffering population. But alas, we were not at all made privy to the antics in the inner circles of the party, and the administration. Some elements in the regime of the day were keenly interested in perpetuating the levy and procurement system. The fact was that by perpetuating the tyranny and oppression of grain procurement, they filled their own coffers along with those of many other government functionaries. Indeed they appropriated a large share from it for themselves. The regime shielded them.

Procurement officials usually requisitioned the services of some people in possession of licensed hunting guns. They misused their official position by procuring paddy according to their sweet will (by demonstrating muscle power through the gun wielding associates). This distanced ordinary rural people from the policy of NC and they began to gravitate towards communal politics and tied their hopes to Pakistan.

The gradual shift

Let me recall an incident in this context. The village named Dunipora in Kulgam tehsil is located close to Kalshi (Bihibagh). The procurement officer accompanied by his gun - totting comrades came to this village and forced his way into the house of a peasant. There was a young man in the house and he told the procurement officer (perhaps in a slightly loud tone) that there were still four months to go before the harvesting time set in. He said he had not any surplus paddy to give to the government. On hearing these simple words the officer flew into rage because the truth spoken by the youth suited neither him nor the government. He ordered that the young man was given a thrashing. The beating was so brutal as to take his life. There are some more examples of this tyrannical conduct. The sad part of the story is that there was nobody to listen to what was going on, and to propose a remedy. If the peasant raised his voice against oppression he

was immediately labeled as Pakistani agent. That brought him many more miseries and hardships.

As a result of a reign of terror let loose against Kashmir peasantry, those who till the other day had raised the slogan of "Beware invaders, we Kashmiris are ready to fight you back" (*hamelb awar kababardar/ham Kahmiri hain taiyyar*), were now forced by their own masters and leaders to shift their sympathies and hopes to the invaders from across the border. Apart from revenue and cooperative functionaries, the procurement officials began a mad race of amassing wealth through illegal and corrupt means. Ironically the National Conference as well as the people were distancing from the Naya Kashmir agenda, each for its own reason. All voices raised against this injustice were ruthlessly stifled. The people were pushed to political void instead of political awareness.

Peace Conference

In those days a movement called Peace Movement was fielded under the leadership of Saifud-Din Kichlu. It was a non-political organization, which was joining its voice with the international voice against the use of atom bomb. It demanded banning atom bomb. This movement sprang soon after the dropping of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Word War II as a result of which millions of people had been killed and millions more were afflicted with fatal radiation impact. The movement's sole purpose was to save humanity from the disasters of war, and motivate all for an era of peace and progress. Julie Curie, Picasso and the Dean of Canterbury were among its outstanding leaders. Some dedicated Indians followed suit. In Kashmir Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq led the movement. A facet of this movement was to obtain signatures of people on a memorandum demanding imposition of ban on atom bomb. Rallies were organized for international peace. I also joined this movement because I was a strong votary of world peace. I believed that peace was the most important pre-requisite

for social, psychological and moral progress. I believed that every one ought to serve humanity and make his/her contribution.

Punitive action

Once I met Sadiq and told him about the ouster of some NC workers of Kulgam tehsil by Mirza Afzal Baig for factional reasons. One among the ousted persons was Abdul Kabir, an energetic NC worker from Tsawalgam in Kulagm tehsil. What the NC did soon after ousting the rule of the Maharaja and assuming power for itself, was to stifle any voice that was raised against its wrong policies. The NC leadership did so in order to keep itself saddled in the seat of power. They saw to it that no voice other than theirs was raised and heard in the valley. Thus self-seeking leadership in the NC singled out each activist in the organization who was eager to put the agenda of Naya Kashmir into action, and sidelined him uncremoniously. Abdul Kabir was one to be targetted because he was a selfless and an outspoken person. Not content with that, a case of swindling party funds was framed against him and this forced him to go underground. Thereafter, he began hobnobbing with Political Conference founded by Mohiud-Don Qara. I thought that if it was possible to drag Abdul Kabir and others like him to the fold of Peace Conference, then they would not want to leave the NC platform and go to some other party.

Once I placed a suggestion before Sadiq that by admitting this alienated activist to the Peace Conference, we could stop them from taking a wrong political direction. It was arranged that we would call a rally of peace conference and Sadiq would be addressing it. I had talked to him about Abdul Kabir presenting himself in this rally.

The fact was that Afzal Baig had a close relative in this area and he wanted this relative to maintain his sway. Thus a conspiracy was hatched to oust Abdul Kabir Wani. When Baig came to know about the rally, he advised against

holding it. I tried to convince him that it was going to be a peace conference for world peace and that Abdul Kabir was a non-political worker and, therefore, had been included in it so that he did not go astray. But Baig refused to budge. Anyway, after receiving the consent from Sadiq we went along with the preparations. We publicized the impending conference in the villages far and wide. We announced that Sadiq would be presiding over it. In those days Mir Qasim happened to be the private assistance (PA) of Baig. On the instructions of Baig, he came to Sadiq and tried to convince him not to attend the rally. Sadiq was taken in by Qasim's words and excused himself from attending the conference on the appointed day. Next day, Damodar Bhat and I, together reminded Sadiq that he was scheduled to participate in the conference that day. Sadiq declined to come. In truth, Mir Qasim had given him a distorted picture. In any case we went ahead with preparations with great fervour. One day, on the instigation of Afzal Baig, truckloads of armed policemen and some goons from the locality suddenly appeared on the conference premises and attacked the participants. They spread panic and chaos by attacking right and left and dismantling the platform. They attacked the kitchen in which food for the delegates was cooking and strewed the ground with cooked food. They attacked us, the organizers too. Abdur-Rahman Rahat, Motilal Misri, Damoodar Bhat, Abdul Kabir Wani and I were made main targets. Wani was arrested because he had been charged of embezzlement of party funds. A warrant under section 512 was issued against me. The goons physically manhandled me. This atrocious attack spread a wave of fear in Kulgam. Damodar Bhat received head injuries and back in Srinagar he showed these to the lawyers. Abdur-Rahman Rahat and Moti Lal Misri both accompanied him. I distinctly remember that a well known lawyer named Latif Ahmad had been entrusted the manipulation of the goons and a defense council was formed.

Sadiqs belated stand

On learning about the event, Sadiq left for Kulgam. He met me in Bijbehara and took me to Anantnag under cover. We went to the residence of Mir Qasim. He left me in one room and went into another where the Deputy Commissioner of Anantnag had already arrived. Sadiq spoke harsh words to the Deputy Commissioner. He told him that if we were to suppress brutally a convention or a conference for peace during popular government, then how could we speak of freedom of press and platform? It is a cruel joke with the concept of freedom of press and platform. He decided to proceed to Kulgam because the area was still rocking with the fury of the goons. The Deputy Commissioner tried to dissuade him arguing that it would create a law and order situation. But Sadiq was determined to go. At Kulgam he took stock of the ground situation. His visit certainly reduced the atmosphere of tension and fear to some extent. Aziz Laway and Ahsan Rishi of Tsawalgam had also received injuries. Sadiq met them and they apprised him of what precisely had happened. He realized that the convention was deliberately disrupted and that the pretext carved out was that it did not really intend to give a call for peace but was an attempt to pressurize the government into discarding levy and procurement. The reality is that this was not at all the objective of organizing the conference.

Anti- procurement move

This was the first hideous stroke at the roots of freedom of expression in democratic Kashmir. After this event, we deliberately began to propagate against the harmfulness of levy and procurement system. Tswalgam incident had revealed that the government intended to continue with its oppressive policy in this regard. We held numerous rallies in Zainapora, Mohanpora, Wodoora, Shangas, Kaharavat and

other villages. We raised our voice against forcible and repulsive methods of imposing levy and procurement. We asked for stopping these and collecting food grains through a just and reasonable method. A rally was organized in Memandar Shupian. The government of the day tried to mislead the people and whip up passion against us. A shopkeeper of Memandar permitted us to use the space in front of his shop for the gathering. Abdul-Majid Banday of Shupian and Amirullah Khan of Yaripora were also present among the audience. The goons hired by NC leaders attacked this rally and tried to disrupt it. They labeled us Indian agents. Fortunately, the shopkeeper pushed us into the shop and in that way saved us from the assault of the hooligans. They continued to hurl abuses on us and stoned and battered the shutter from outside. Sheikh Mansur of Kachhdoora was the ringleader of this group of assailants. They decided to wait till nightfall and then set the shop on fire and roast us alive. But a noble man of Gagren, then present in the village, conveyed the news of this conspiracy to one police inspector named Ghulam Ahmad of Shupian. The inspector took a timely step. A posse of about thirty policemen landed in Memandar and saved us from being roasted alive. He took us to the police station in Shupian saying that we were to be punished for raising our voice against levy. The goons were satisfied on hearing that, and in this way our lives were saved.

Struggle continues

We did not succumb to pressures from the government. Conversely, we reinforced our efforts to run the movement against tyrannical levy and procurement system. I remember that in Tswalgam, some women working in the fields were singing the song in my praise¹: It said

Rishehdev chbuh diwan jameh petheh taaray
Amneh mujahid waray chha

¹In Kashmir peasants, both men and women, working in paddy fields usually sing folk songs in a group.

(Rishi Dev is sending telegrams from Jammu and asking if the peace volunteers are safe)

This shows that the ordinary people not only sympathized with our movement but also came forward to be by our side in a moment of crisis. The government was bent upon trampling the healthy movement under its iron heel. It was diverting people's attention from serious economic issues facing them, and was misguiding them by raising emotional slogans.

Setting the record right

I would like to set right a blatant distortion of facts. Sayyid Mir Qasim has recorded in his autobiography that he was the first to raise his voice against the method of procurement, and that Abdul Kabir was impressed by it. This is a white lie, a totally unfounded claim. Of course, he had a role in trying to kill the movement. In his capacity as personal assistant of Afzal Baig, he had conspired to disrupt the Tswalgam rally, and he had also played a conspicuous role in presenting a distorted picture of this convention to Sadiq. I distinctly remember that when he dinned into the ear of Sadiq and managed to dissuade him from participating in the rally, he had told him in no ambiguous words that the organizers were some Indian agents and a handful of Hindus who were brewing something against us and that their real agenda was to do away with procurement.¹⁹

By distorting facts in his autobiography (*Karwan-i-Hayat*), Mir Qasim has tried to claim for himself the credit for

¹⁹It became the culture of NC to stigmatize the Kashmiri Pandits as Indian spies. Even Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah did not stop calling them Indian agents in his biography. The irony is that those who enjoyed the unbounded largesse of the Indian government generation after generation had the cheek to label the deprived and sidelined Pandits as Indian spies. Amusingly, the biography *Atash-e-Chinar* has been awarded by the Sahitya Akademy. (Translator's comment)

movement against levy, revenue and procurement affairs. He has brazenly evaded mentioning real actors of this story. But truth cannot be hidden for all times.

At that point of time Mir Qasim happened to be just a PA of Afzal Baig. He did not play any role in practical politics. How could a PA go against the wishes of his boss and appreciate the slogan "We will give our head but not surplus" (*sar denge surplus nahin denge*) raised by Abdul Kabir Wani? The harsh reality is that Qasim wanted to publicize this movement as a communal movement. He had become the chief adviser to Afzal Baig in perpetrating governments policy of oppression.

My ouster from NC

After the Memandar convention, a conspiracy was hatched to oust me from National Conference. Even at that point of time I continued to take active part in seeing to it that the constructive programmes of the party were successful. I took part in many peace conferences outside the state. I can fondly remember my participation in the conferences at Bombay, Calcutta and Jalandhar. In these deliberations, reputed Kashmiri poet Dinanath Nadim¹, Professor Apurab Somnath² and Abdul Ghani Namtehal, comprised our group.

National Conference had deviated from its plan. It took to empty slogans and unprincipled policies. Sincere and

¹Nadim ranks among stalwart Kashmiri poets of post-independence period. As a patriotic poet, he commands much respect with younger generation. He had leftist leanings and had also visited China.

²Prof. Apurab Somnath was a renowned Professor of English literature. He pandered to socialist ideology and was active in National Conference. He taught at the Post Graduate Department of English in Kashmir University, where he commanded great respect from his large student community. This translator had a long association with him during our stay at Kashmir University. For some unknown reasons, perhaps as a matter of personal vendetta, he was transferred to Jammu University against his wishes. He died at a young age.

dedicated activists began to be sidelined. I, who had dedicated my life to Naya Kashmir programme of Sheikh Abdullah, was now an unwanted entity to be sidelined conspiratorially.

I was still the *halqa* (circle) President of National Conference. Maulavi Saeed had assigned to the President of District Committee, Nabeh Ji the task of removing me from my position. To accomplish this, he came to my village Zainapora. Prior to his coming an incident had taken place there. This village also was adversely affected by food scarcity. Villagers were in a critical situation. They had held a large rally demanding urgent supply of foodgrains. At that time I had gone underground. After the event in Memandar, the government had issued a warrant against me. The allegation brought against me was that I had insinuated the people of Zainpura to bring out a protest rally on the issue of scarcity of foodgrains. In Zainapora, Nabeh Ji gathered information about the ground reality. He was convinced that I had no hand in inducing people to bring out a rally against the scarcity of rations. A mob of six thousand persons came together. He labeled me as extremist and then he proposed to the crowd to remove me from the post of *halqa* president and suggested a new name. A mob of six thousand people all in one voice took my name again and again. Then Nabeh Ji asked the crowd to suggest the name of the delegate. Again the crowd took my name repeatedly. Then in a vein of satire Nabeh Ji asked them to propose the name of a peon. The gathering resounded with my name. The people told him in loud and clear voice that they would never become an instrument of removing Reshi Dev and replacing him by the apple of somebody's eye. Nabeh Ji had clear instructions from party leadership to throw me out. He returned dismayed and disappointed.

The fact is that I did not stick to my position in National Conference by the largesse of any stalwart in the organization. I had the fullest support of the people of my area. This was a time when the seeds of communal hatred

had not been sown into the minds of ordinary people: religion had not been mixed up with politics. People gauged a man by his honesty, sacrifice, dedication and his spirit of serving the cause of the people at large.

Anyway, even after these happenings, I continued to be part of National Conference. Ostensibly, the party leadership, henceforth, gave me little importance. On my part, I desisted from flattering party leadership and resorting to sycophancy. Not coming out of the party, I continued to contribute whatever little I could towards the welfare of the general public. The leadership looked at me with suspicion and this was bound to make my voice ineffective within the party structure.

A new turn

A crucial turn in my political life took place with my first meeting with the famous comrade Dhanvantari in 1947. In Srinagar, I met with him a number of times. I was immensely impressed by his thoughts and ideology. His political understanding and attractive thoughts had induced a good number of political workers to jump into the political fray of the State with all the sincerity and dedication. He had been a close associate of the great martyr Bhagat Singh. The British colonial rulers had sentenced him to seventeen years of imprisonment in exile for being an active freedom fighter. However, he was set free only a few years before India attained freedom. Born in Kali Jani in Jammu, Comrade Dhanvantari suffered fragile health because of torture and incarceration inflicted on him by the British imperialists.

Despite all that, he worked with unremitting dedication putting in sixteen hours a day. Whenever I happened to travel to Jammu, I invariably stole time to see him at his residence. It was during these visits in Jammu that I came to know other leaders like Krishen Dev Sethi, Ram Piyara Saraf, Ghulam Rasool Azad, Ved Pal Deep and Mukat Ji.

Uncertain Naya Kashmir

Much earlier than 1953, people had,, by and large, begun to express uncertainty about full implementation of Naya Kashmir agenda. Political upheaval in the valley had already landed National Conference workers into a state of frustration.¹

Sheikh Abdullah was arrested in 1953. At that point of time I was busy addressing the problems of peasants. I had scant knowledge of how and what pawns were moving on the political chessboard of the State. But I had clearly discerned one significant thing and that was a noteworthy change in the political speeches of Sheikh Abdullah and especially of Mirza Afzal Baig. In their latest speeches they were spitting fire against India and the Hindus. Their tone was rife with communal hatred. I distinctly remember that in his public speeches during those days, Baig repeatedly said that the real agenda of National Conference was to economically paralyse the Kashmiri Hindus exactly to the extent that they (Hindus) were forced to do menial chores of servants in the houses of the Muslims.²

Prior to this, Sheikh Sahib had visited New York. We were told that some American dignitary by the name of Stevenson³

¹Allusion is to the events preceding and following August 9, 1953, the day on which Sheikh Abdullah was removed from power. Curiously enough, no political party in the country ever demanded instituting of a Commission of Inquiry into the dismissal and arrest of Sheikh Abdullah.

²The anti-Hindu and anti-India undertones in the thinking of the NC found expression in an Urdu booklet of about 33 pages titled *Kashmir mein aksariyyat ko aqalliyat mein badalne ki sazisb* authored by one Rahim Rather, an NC MLA from Tsar-e- Sharif and Finance Minister during Farooq Abdullah's regime. Today, (February 2008), he is the leader of opposition in the J&K Legislative Assembly.

³Adlai Stevenson, an influential US Congressman was the running presidential candidate. He had visited Kashmir in early summer 1952 and held secret meetings with the Sheikh. It is generally believed that he was supportive of Sheikh's dream of independent Sultanate of Kashmir. (Translator's comment)

had come to meet him here in Srinagar and that the Sheikh had conferred with him for several hours in private.

The Sheikh was arrested in 1953. This event was followed by strong protests by the people. Communal elements found a good occasion of spreading anti-India hatred among the people. The event provided an opportunity to ordinary Kashmiri of misconstruing the intentions of India. We were also linked up to the event. The rumour floated was that we had gone to Nehru and reported to him the critical situation in Kashmir.¹ But our detractors could not find any success for their game plan. People knew it well that my travels outside Kashmir were undertaken only under the agenda of Peace Conference. They knew that I participated in the rallies of this movement. I was not a minister: I had no access to the circles of political class that was at the helm of affairs. I had special interest in the fundamental programme of National Conference while I remained involved in Peace Conference. I worked with singular dedication for that cause.

Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad had stepped into the shoes of the Sheikh. Once he sent for me and offered me the position of Bloc Development Officer. I had hesitation in accepting government job. Had I agreed it would have meant that I had to become a yes-man for all good or bad decisions that the government would make.

Works of public utility

However, on the advice of Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq, and some more progressive leaders, I resumed my activities in National Conference. A voluntary force named Peace Brigade was raised from the cadres of National Conference under Bakshis leadership. Its aim was to rein in the activities of

¹Once, in the course of a casual sitting with late Dr. Niranjan Nath Raina, I broached the subject of circumstances leading to the arrest of the Sheikh. The veteran leftist ideologue made a cryptic remark. He said, "When things came to that pass, we had to intervene and see that he was removed".
(Translator's note)

the hoodlum and political hooligans. The Peace Brigade also aimed at stifling the voice of dissenters along with that of the hooligans. But the fact is that gradually the Bakhshi used this force to consolidate his authority and to stifle all dissenting voices.¹ I maintained clear distance from this notorious outfit and while trying to save myself from its calamitous reach, continued with my association with the National Conference. I did prevail upon the government of the day to do some selective works for the public good. I was also instrumental in obtaining sanction of digging some canals for irrigation of arable land. Among these canals are those of Rishipora, Rakh Litar, and Maslaawara. Much before 1963, I had met with Sheikh Abdullah along with several delegations and had made him agree to the project of digging the Zainpora canal. This canal brought prosperity to dozens of villages in the area. I was instrumental in getting several schools upgraded after 1953 episode. Along with that we also had success in opening some new schools in the area. I was also directly involved in opening some hospitals and dispensaries in the area. My efforts were crowned with success when most of the roads in the area were asphalted. Apart from my deep involvement in these works of public utility, I was instrumental in organizing several conferences and conventions in the region in which activists received briefing on contemporary political scenario.

It should be mentioned that all these works of public utility that I undertook were accomplished without the instrumentality of middlemen and contractors. By way of example, the rate offered by the government for earth

¹Kashmiris gave it the nickname of "kuntreh *pandab*" "literally meaning twenty nine and fifteen. Its activists were paid a consolidated amount of thirty rupees per month. Out of this sum they paid one anna as the cost of a revenue ticket that was affixed to the muster roll on which they signed or put their thumb impression. Thus they actually received twenty-nine rupees and fifteen annas in hand (a rupee then comprised sixteen annas) as their monthly cash dole came to be nicknamed as "*kutreh pandab*".

mowing was seventeen rupees per thousand square feet. Fifty per cent of this would go into the pockets of the contractor. He paid just seven rupees per thousand square feet to the labourers. I organized village folks for doing this work. We managed to accomplish many other works by the villagers themselves without the instrumentality of the contractors. The villagers received a good deal of remuneration for their hard labour. We ensured that the work was done efficiently to our satisfaction. The Rishipora canal stands out among the works we completed. The village people dug it jointly.

Another problem faced by the people of Zainpora was the shortage of firewood because the forest stood at a long distance from this village. Firewood remained a persistent problem. I had put a suggestion before Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad that instead of permit system, firewood depots were opened in different villages and that would do away with the corrupt practices prevailing in the department. Although Bakhshi agreed with me but he was surrounded by a clique of contractors and his brother Bakhshi Rashid who had vested interest in the prevailing system. They did not like my suggestion and felt displeased with me. They began to conspire against me and made it a point to sideline me. Evidently, such people considered me a thorn in their side and an obstruction in their loot of public property. However, I put my heart and soul in the service and developmental works of my area.

Tryst with ideology

I actively participated in the deliberations in political camps. I used to emphasize upon political workers to read the thought-provoking writings of intellectuals like Sardar Jaafari, Krishan Chander, Maxim Gorky, Lenin and others. They wrote about human fraternity and support to poverty-stricken people all over the world. We wanted them to be fully aware of democratic values.

A year or two later, when Bakhshi Rashid became General Secretary of National Conference, Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad had very little need of men like me. Once in a public rally in Kulgam, Bakhshi Rashid and Shamsud-Din openly declared that their party would not tolerate political activists unless the Peace Brigade patronized them. Only those persons who could flatter Bakhshi Rashid were now considered true workers. Those who had their individual thinking were considered among his enemies. He (Bakhshi Rashid) felt that people with independent mind were an obstruction in the family rule of the Bakhshi house.

During the regime of Bakhshi, several remarkable achievements were made despite unleashing political oppression and hooliganism. One could mention about free education up to the highest level, opening of new schools and colleges, construction of roads and bridges and many such developmental programmes. Nevertheless, Bakhshi showed little interest in creating conditions for proper training of political workers or acquainting the masses of people of the realities of ground situation.

It fell to the lot of Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq to arrange camps for imparting political training to activists. NC leadership was bent upon scuttling this part of his activities. NC leadership was responsible for spreading a culture of sycophancy and flattery for self-aggrandizement. Patriotic and politically alive workers in the NC were sidelined one by one. As already stated, I had firmly opposed the middlemen and contractors who were adepts in the art of flattery. This harmful skill distances a true political worker from his real mission and makes him succumb to personal loyalties. I was removed from the position of Tehsil President of National Conference.

Split in NC

Fed up with hooliganism and authoritarian behaviour of NC leadership, (Bakhshi regime), Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq

parted ways with the Bakhshi. He founded the Democratic National Conference (DNC). For some time, the DNC very ably performed its role as the party in opposition strengthening democratic traditions. It spoke for genuine rights of the people. But later on, owing partly to lust for power and partly because of pressures from the central government, Sadiq returned to the fold of the Bakhshi.

One more reason for my ouster from the NC was my name. To be a Hindu was my biggest disadvantage that denied me a berth in the council of ministers or in the assembly. There were many sincere and dedicated political workers like myself whose ability and merit were taken a negative point. The 1906 Communal Award of the British imperialists still remained in force in one way or the other in the whole of Hindustan and particularly in Kashmir. A number of my students became ministers during the regime of Mir Qasim. Even Sadiq, who was a person of high ideals, honest to the hilt, a socialist and a patriot, too, inducted capitalists into seats of power. For example, he inducted the members of Burza and Tirath Ram families into the Assembly¹ and in this way he missed the opportunity of allowing grassroot and sincere political workers to represent the people in right earnest.

Bakhshi's exit

Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad was obliged to tender resignation under Kamaraj Plan.² He was succeeded by Shamsud-Din. It was during his regime that the drama of stealing the holy relic in Hazratbal shrine was stage-

¹The Burza business family was connected to Sadiq, and Tirath Ram was closely linked to the D.P. Dhar family through matrimonial alliance. (Translator's comment)

²Nehru wanted removal of some political personalities from power. Bakhshi was one of them. He devised the ingenious plan called Kamaraj Plan. Kamaraj Nadar, the Congress President at that time demanded all top Congressmen to send in their resignations to strengthen the party. The Bakhshi was trapped.

managed. Actually, the relic had been displaced. The valley submerged into great commotion when the news of the "loss" of the holy relic was broken. Angry mobs came out on streets to make strong protestation. People of all faiths, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslim in the valley greatly resented the outrage. The relic was recovered with great difficulty but the real culprit has never been identified till date. The headline *asli mujrim ko pesh karo* (produce the real culprit) became the choice banner news of the dailies. The efforts of the Central government in recovering the holy relic proved fruitful.¹

Hoodlums, thugs, corrupt ministers and covetous bureaucracy in Bakhshis government rent the democratic traditions asunder. In reaction, DNC came into being in 1957. One of the main objectives of this organization was to restore democratic values and social justice. Towards this end, it wanted to perform the role of a healthy opposition. I joined this organization and was made the President of the Tehsil unit and a member of provincial committee. During my stint in DNC, we could organize party rallies and meetings at many places. The aim was to focus the attention of the people on wrong decisions and deeds of the government. During that period, we had to bear the attacks of Peace Brigade. I arranged a rally in Zainapora under the leadership of Sadiq. Despite governments opposition, nearly twenty thousand people assembled in that rally. I arranged DNC conclaves in Badgam, Kulgam and Anantnag tehsils also. Occasionally I traveled to Jammu to work for this organization in its rallies there. The hoodlums of Peace Brigade usually threatened and intimidated us but we remained undeterred and carried forward our mission of restoration of democracy in the state.

¹Grapevine has it that the relic was removed by Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad's brother Rashid Bakhshi to let his ailing mother have a glimpse and receive the blessings. Nehru deputed Lal Bahadur Shastri to Srinagar to help recover the relic and cool down public temper.

Sadiq's U turn

The year was 1962. Without taking us into confidence Sadiq rejoined the fold of Bakhshi Rashid's National Conference. Girdhari Lal Dogra, D.P. Dhar, Mir Qasim and Sadiq himself took this decision. On the ground we were cautioning people that DNC movement was aimed at bringing political stability and eradicating hooliganism and corruption from the state ruling apparatus. With Sadiq taking the decision, we had to cut a sorry figure before the public. DNC had been brought into existence just to pressurize the government of the day to address major problems facing the people. When the stalwarts of the organization joined hands with rulers of the time just for the lust of power, we were rendered helpless. Sadiq brought pressures on me to join NC. Despite my reluctance, I acceded to his insistence and rejoined NC.

But, by that time, further erosion within the party had taken place. There was no alternate platform to give vent to the grievances of the people.. I was opposed to Bakhshi Rashid's high-handedness and hooliganism. He stuck to his earlier stand of not giving us any position in the party structure. Our word was never heard on the forum of the party. Instead of encouragement, many of my colleagues and I were treated with communal prejudice. A policy of segregating and teasing us was deliberately pursued.

Pak intrusion of 1965

Pakistan's second armed intrusion began in 1965. Now this was the time to do something for the territorial integrity of the country. Ignoring all differences, I girded up my loins to organize people against the conspiracies of the intruders. I traveled to most of the villages in Shupian tehsil and exhorted people to remain united against the incursion of the enemy. I cautioned them about the conspiracies which the enemy was hatching. We organized impressive rallies in Kalraspora, Mujihpatri, Bama Naseri and Shadi Marg villages

and areas. We exhorted people to live close to one another and remain united. The infiltrators could easily come from the forests of Yusmarg. Not caring for my life, I often went deep into those areas with or without security but accompanied by local people. We created hurdles in the path of infiltrators on their way to the towns of the valley. The infiltrators were repulsed. Once again Kashmiris gave a befitting reply to nefarious designs of Pakistan. They had the tools of fraternity and unity in their hands to resist the enemy with.

My Hindu name

Election to the Legislative Assembly was round the corner. But a little earlier, Sadiq himself had laid the foundation of the Congress party for the whole of the State. I was a part of it. I was made President of Shupian Tehsil Congress. When the time for distribution of tickets for assembly elections came, I was surprised to see that with Sadiq at the helm of affairs, the tickets were given even to some of those who had become the guides of the infiltrators in 1965. For example, Sadiq Ali was the Congress candidate from Budgam constituency. He was not a member of either the Congress or National Conference. The only credential he had was that he had become a notorious person in guiding the infiltrators. Abdur Rahman Dar was made a Congress candidate from Keymu constituency. He was fundamentally a staunch supporter of Jamaat-e-Islami and its politics. The two very sincere, honest and steadfast workers of Budgam and Keymu, namely Abdur-Rahman Rahat and Amirullah, respectively, were ignored. This was also the case with Budul constituency where a Block Officer, instrumental in encouraging the infiltrators to wreck destruction in the area was given mandate.¹

Evidently, under these circumstances, there was no

¹These examples throw a flood of light on the rapid success of militancy in Kashmir before and after 1990. Thus hobnobbing with the militants is nothing new for NC or other political parties and their leadership.

question of I figuring anywhere in any list. I was dubbed a communist or a Bata (Hindu), good enough negative qualifications to keep me out of sight. A number of delegations from our area met Sadiq, Mir Qasim and D.P¹ to protest against this decision of the Congress but to no avail. I felt it was very difficult for me to remain active on all fronts. The trappings of a Hindu name held me back from my movement onwards on all political fronts. It hurt me. Greatly dismayed with ground realities, I decided to resign as president of tehsil Congress and Provincial Committee. I found there was no place for secular politics in Kashmir. People with prejudicial attitude and of communal hunch had held political parties in their clutch. Imperceptibly, the intention of separating the State from the Indian Union was buttressed from inside the party. Thus there remained only the Communist Party, which, in my perception bore the secular label in terms of its name and ideology.

Stepping out of Congress, I joined the Communist Party, and filled the nomination form for the membership of legislative assembly on behalf of this party. But my application was rejected on the pretext that I had not taken an oath of loyalty to the Indian Union.² Applications of many more candidates of our party were rejected on the same plea. Indeed Congress leadership wanted to see their nominated candidates winning the election without a contestant.

¹Durga Prasad Dhar, the scion of great Dhar House of Safakadal, was an active progressive worker of NC. He had established close connections with New Delhi and was considered a link between J&K and the Centre. He became Union Minister for Planning and also served as India's Ambassador in Moscow. A man of varied tastes, he had approach to Nehru and Indira Gandhi. He died of heart attack at an early age of 58.

²It is amusing that a Pandit labeled as Indian agent is not admitted to the political fold even when he declines to take an oath of allegiance to the Indian Union Constitution. This shows the deep-seated prejudice against the community. (translator's comment)

Jamaat-e Islami

This was the time when Jammat-e Islami schools (*darsgab*) were opened in villages and localities throughout the valley. These seminaries gave great momentum to fundamentalist ideology. Serious efforts were made to undo the teachings of fraternity and equality brought by Laleshwari (Laleh Ded) and Shaykh Nurud-Din Wali¹ from the valley of Kashmir. Retrograde and imperialist forces and organizations in foreign countries provided substantial amounts of money through local anti-national conduits in order to speed up campaign for the popularity of Jamaat-e Islami schools. Like unconcerned spectators, pseudo-secular political leaders and state authorities in Kashmir watched this development without moving a finger. They pretended not to have to do anything with this situation and behaved in a manner as if they saw nothing and heard nothing. The truth is that they were overt and covert accomplices in these designs.

After becoming a member of the Communist Party, I functioned as the General Secretary of Kisan Party. But within a span of one or two years, I saw the real face of the Communist Party behind the mask that it was wearing. My association with the Communist Party had begun when I was introduced to Comrade Dhanvantari. However, during those days there seemed some compatibility between the ideals of National Conference and the Socialists. The Naya Kashmir Manifesto of NC was committed to social justice and eradication of poverty. Unfortunately, this ideal was blunted by the politics of communalism and opportunism.

After joining the State Communist Party, I found that it, too, compromised with retrograde thinking. They gave priority to professions that dealt a severe blow to the great tradition of social justice. Hindu-Muslim hatred had infected this party as well. The party was communist only in name. Its ways and

¹I have already challenged his credentials in an earlier gloss.

methods were remarkably similar to that of the Congress. Here also personal merit of the workers was ignored and their importance to the party was gauged through the prism of religion. Communist leadership behaved arbitrarily and without political principles; they served their self-interests. The interests of society and the nation received second priority with them.

I am reminded of an incident pertaining to the Communist leader of the Valley namely Abdus-Sattar Ranjoor.¹ A land tiller named Abdul-Kabir lived in his locality. He had been forcibly evicted from his landed possession. Actually Sattar Ranjoor wanted to buy that plot of land for himself. I considered this mean act totally against communist ideology. I could no more continue to be an active worker of this party.

Z.A. Ahmad, the known communist leader was in-charge of Kashmir branch. I related the black deeds of some of the party workers to him. But strangely he did not move his finger. Some people closely associated with Ranjoor indulged in timber smuggling practice. I conveyed this too to Ahmad. But no change was visible in his approach. All that I could understand was that my plain speaking was gall to him.

In 1979, Harkishan Singh Surjeet came to Kashmir with the purpose of opening a branch of CPM. He called me to Srinagar. He told me that he had dedicated his whole life to the cause of the peasants and to promoting secular against communal politics. He said that I should take active part in his party. He made me vice president of Kisan Mahaz. I was invited to participate in the Peasants Conventions in Trichur in Kerala, and later on, in Midnapur, West Bengal. I participated in these conventions on my own expenses. I was also invited to be an observer in Vijaywada communist convention. I made this trip again on my own expenses. I was getting freedom fighters pension from 1972, which made it possible for me to participate in these conferences.

¹Militants gunned him in Digital Reservation Foundation
CC-0. Again him in Digital Reservation Foundation

The scenario at this point of time was that people flocked to National Conference with the motive of amassing wealth and spreading hatred against India in the minds of ordinary people. Likewise, the echelons of Communist Party, too, towed the same line. They had scant care for bringing political awareness among the masses of people or addressing their pressing problems. In great despair I witnessed this sordid turn of events and chose to remain tight lipped.

Now I remained confined to my home and took up my ancestral profession of attending to my petty agricultural pursuits. For most of the time, I kept myself busy with peasantry. The dream, for which I had wasted precious days of my youth, was lost in pitched darkness. Despite invitations from so-called secular organization of CPM or other parties, I distanced myself from the mess and painfully watched the vicious game of self-aggrandizement and nepotism in full swing. Political parties posing as protagonists of Indian secularism and local governments were interested only in grabbing positions of power. They showed scant interest in resisting external forces that were bent upon destabilizing the state and society. There was a scramble for seats of power, for wealth and for selfish interests. And there were no qualms of conscience if these objectives were achieved even by trampling under foot all democratic norms or the sections of minority as well as the weaker and deprived segments of society.

During the stewardship of Sadiq, I had gained the bitter experience of how them Mir Qasim made all efforts to isolate him from ordinary party workers. He wanted to replace them by his own henchmen and loyalists. When Sadiq was the chief minister, Mir Qasim managed to rope in thirty MLAs and took them all the way to New Delhi to lodge a protest. Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister at that point of time, and she was profoundly knowledgeable about the Congress and other leaders of Kashmir. Mir Qasim's grouse was that Sadiq

was instrumental in freeing Sheikh Abdullah from the prison; he meted out to him a liberal treatment. However, Indira Gandhi knew that most of the Kashmir MLAs were "Khaliq made" who had not even the remotest concern with the politics of the state and its problems. She sent them back disappointed and dismayed. She had bluntly told them that "Khaliq made" members of assembly were not competent to take decisions like that. The "Khaliq made" term referred to Abdul Khaliq, the then Deputy Commissioner of Anantnag who had helped most of these dissenting members to win the elections uncontested by fraudulently rejecting the nomination papers of their opponents. In that election, nomination papers of those candidates who did not enjoy the favour of Mir Qasim had been rejected under one or the other pretext. The common pretext was that the applicants had not submitted their affidavits in accordance with the constitution of the Indian Union. My nomination form also met the same fate.

During the closing years of Sadiq government, Mir Qasim had made it very difficult for his supporters in the party to work in Congress organization. At the end of the day, Sadiq had understood Mir Qasim's machinations of internal subversion. He coveted the seat of chief minister. I had an opportunity of meeting with Sadiq a short while before his death. In that meeting, he candidly expressed that he had become the target of Qasim's conspiracy, which resulted in the Congress party passing into the hands of opportunists. In the same meeting, he expressed to me that he intended to control the damage and take into his hands the reins of the party. He even exhorted me to take active part in the Congress. Soon after this meeting, he was taken ill and removed to Chandigarh where he breathed his last.

Mir Qasim

Mir Qasim succeeded Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq. He began his administration with a free for the Jamaat-e Islami. It was owing to his support and encouragement that four or five

known Jamaatis managed to win assembly seats in the election. In Nandi constituency, the Congress candidate lost by six thousand votes. The reason was that Mir Qasim had fielded a close relative of his against this official candidate. Some Congress candidates were deployed in his election campaign. Despite spending a lot of money, he could win only by a small margin of two thousand votes. The Jammāt-e Islami candidate won by seven thousand votes. This was how Mir Qasim scuttled the chances of Congress winning the constituency. He played vital role in dividing the Congress vote. It was during the tenure of Mir Qasim that Jammāt-e Islami succeeded in recruiting anti-Indian elements in the ranks of administration so that the voice of the nationalist movement would be stifled in the state.

Sadiq

Notwithstanding some of his mistakes, Sadiq was politically energetic and vibrant. He showed much interest in imparting political training to workers. As a result of his efforts political training schools were opened at many places in the valley during 1948-49. Two such schools were opened in Mujahid Manzil and Malang Pora in Pulwama. I had participated in their briefings. This was a good and useful experiment. But later on, Mirza Afzal Baig and Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad both discouraged political orientation programme of these schools. These were ultimately closed down. During his tenure as Chief Minister, Sadiq gave more than desirable importance to Mir Qasim, and unwittingly diluted principles of democracy that were once very dear to him. Towards the last days of his life, he was fully in the grip of Mir Qasim. I lost all hope in Sadiq.

Secularism Abused

The in-power clique that had launched hate-Hindu campaign was methodically patronized during the regime of Mir Qasim. I am reminded of an incident. A small village named Sofi Pora is located close to Zainpura. Apart from a

majority of Hanafi Sunni Muslims, there existed some Ahmadia¹ families also. The *nambardar* of this village belonged to the Hanafi² sect. The villagers had many complaints against him and wanted to replace him with another person who hailed from Ahmadia sect. The *nambardar* (headman of the village) went to the District Congress President in Anantnag. He made him a gift of eight hundred rupees in cash and a canister of ghee. With these gifts, he managed to win his favour. It is amusing to note how the district president pleaded the case of the Hanafi Muslim's candidature. He incited the Hanafi Maulavis of the village against the Ahmadis with all conceivable vulgarity. For example, the *maulavis* said that if a dog was drinking water from a stream, people downstream could drink from that stream but if in place of a dog there was an Ahmadi, then downstream water was disallowed (*haram*) for the Hanafis. The matter was blown out of proportion and tension escalated so much so that the Ahmadis were threatened that their houses would be set on fire and their lives endangered.

In those days I happened to be the Congress block president. Some elders of the Ahmadia sect came to me with their complaints. In my capacity as Congress Block President, I approached the SSP of Anantnag to tell him that he should send for the elders of both the communities and impress upon them the need for reconciliation. I thought that the issue of *nambardari* would become quite serious if made the source of hatred, between the two communities. The behaviour of the Hanafis had also caused some anxiety to the

¹Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian in Punjab was the founder of this sect. His followers are called Ahmadi or Qadiyani. He declared that Muhammad was not the last of prophets. Pakistan does not recognize the Ahmadis as Muslims.

²Abu Hanifa was one of the famous four great theologians of Sunni Muslim faith. He flourished at Bukhara in present-day Uzbekistan in 8th century A.D. His theological school called Hanafi School of orthodox Islam attained great fame in the sub-continent.

Pandits of Zainpora. Their delegation to Mustafa Khan, the District Commissioner of Anantnag, had expressed its serious apprehensions. But the DC, instead of committing the government to the protection of a minority, took them to task in a manner as if they had not even the right to express their fears. In the meanwhile, some Hanafi persons went to see the district Congress president to speak against my initiative of forging amity between the two communities. The President gave them a patient hearing but then flew into rage expressing why a Hindu should interfere in a case that pertained exclusively to the Muslims only. For me, it was only an organizational issue and not a Hindu-Muslim one. The President spoke to two persons (Abdur-Rashid of Chitragam and Ghulam Qadir Baba of Babapore) that their priority was to cleanse the Congress parity of the people with *tilak* (the crimson colour, which Hindus put on their foreheads). What right had a *tilak*-bearing person to meddle in this issue, he asked? Abdur-Rashid was formerly a member of Plebiscite Front and on my persuasion he had joined Congress. He met me the next day and related to me the story in full.

This is how Congress became an instrument of propagating communal hatred during the tenure of Mir Qasim. This was the period in which separatist forces in the state received encouragement. The regime also provided open field for bribery and corruption. Bureaucracy looted public exchequer. This phenomenon continues till date. A close study will show that many among the bureaucrats today are those who were inducted during Qasim's period.

Various political organizations of Kashmir had, advertently and inadvertently, contributed to anti-Hindu sentiment before and after 1947 just to achieve their political goal. Prior to 1947, the struggle against the Maharaja was labeled as a struggle against Hindu assertiveness. Of course there were some Hindus who opposed the Quit Kashmir movement in a manner in which a particular class of Muslim population had also opposed. Yet in the great and decisive struggle for

freedom, the Hindus and Muslims of the valley fought shoulder to shoulder against the autocratic regime.

After the reins of power passed into the hands of National Conference in 1947, the party selectively targeted Hindus for ouster from various walks of life under one pretext or the other. Most of these Hindus were protagonists of secular ideology and religious tolerance. For example a Kisan Conference leader and *nambardar* Shivji Bhatt of Fatehpora, Anantnag was forced to leave Kashmir after 1947. But he managed to get this order cancelled by paying a bribe of eighteen hundred rupees to National Conference. He is the same Shivji Bhatt whom the Muslims of Fatehpora had made to lay the foundation stone of the mosque at Hazratbal Fatehpora. This mosque remains till date the symbol of Hindu-Muslim fraternity of Kashmir.

I am reminded that when Sadiq laid the foundation of Congress in the Kashmir, the Sheikh pronounced it an organization of the Hindus. He raised the slogan of social boycott (*tark-i- mawalat*) against those who joined the organization. People were told neither to dine nor talk to the Congressites. A wave of hatred was spread against the Congressmen to the extent that once in Bogam, Kulgam, a Congressman named Ahsan Khan offered prayers in the local mosque. At that time hey was spread out on the floor of the mosque instead of furnishing. After he had read the *namaz*, the people collected that hey, dumped it outside on the ground and set it on fire thereby indicating that they had purified the mosque of a sinners presence. Thus healthy and out-reaching political vision was replaced by conservatism and shortsightedness.

Left parities were no exception to this retrograde culture. From the very beginning, the Communist party was also run along communal lines and that was the reason why I quit it. Dedicated and secular workers were sidelined while malefactors like timber smugglers and drug traffickers were inducted into the party and encouraged. All this happened under the patronage of the

Return of Sheikh

Indira-Sheikh Abdullah Accord of 1975 took place when Qasim was at the helm of affairs in the State. Sheikh became the Chief Minister. He termed the Plebiscite Front era as the period of aimless wandering. But the anti-India and anti-Hindu elements boosted during past twenty or twenty-two years were now in the seat of power. The Sheikh totally ignored the leadership of the minority community. For example instead of Moti Lal Misri, a dedicated freedom fighter, a Hindu judge was given the opportunity of representing the Hindu minority in the assembly. This person had not even the remotest link with the community affairs.¹ The same treatment was meted out to the people of Jammu.

Muftis machinations

Bribery and hooliganism broke all records during this period. I would not like to go into those details. His son Dr. Farooq Abdullah succeeded the Sheikh. Owing to his carelessness, inexperience and immaturity, Ghulam Muhammad Shah was able to grab the seat of chief minister. The union government, too, played some role in propelling him to that position. Under his tutelage Awami National Conference came into existence. Shah's wife and Farooq's sister Khalida Shah headed this party. Some time later, Mufti Saeed manipulated the ouster of G.M. Shah by inciting his goons to attack and loot the Hindus in South Kashmir.² The Hindus of Dhanav, Bogund, Wanpoh and other villages were

¹Perhaps allusion is to Mohan Kishen Tikku.

²The Hindu houses and some temples in the rural Anantnag were attacked and damaged. Despite repeated demands of the victims of violence, the State government never ordered an inquiry into the incident nor debated the issue in the Assembly leave alone providing any relief to the affected persons. The Mufti became Home Minister of India in V.P. Singh government on the strong recommendation of Delhi's Shahi Imam of Jamia Masjid.

made the target. Apart from these villages, Hindu temples at Lokeh Bhavan, Fatehpura, Aeshmuqam and some more places were destroyed and Hindu houses targeted.

Prior to this vandalizing, many false and baseless rumours were spread to stoke the flames of religious frenzy. It was rumoured that Muslims in Jammu were massacred and the dead bodies of Kashmiris were sent to the valley in three truckloads. The only purpose of spreading such canards was to instigate Kashmiri Muslims against the Hindus. Muslim groups in Anantnag district organized rallies and while expressing their anger, attacked many Hindu settlements, vandalized their temples and looted their houses. For the first time after 1947, a planned conspiracy was hatched to force the Hindu minority out of the valley. Behind all this lay the greed among the Congress leaders for grabbing political power.¹

Farooq again

The Shah government fell and Farooq began his second stint as chief minister. The minority community was gripped by insecurity and fear. Religion and politics had got mixed up in Kashmir for quite some time. In the election of 1989, religious fanaticism was at its peak. All anti-India and anti-Hindu groups joined hands to form the Muslim United Front (MUF). The opposition adopted precisely the same antics as were adopted by the National Conference earlier. Previously, NC used to ask for votes in the name of Islam and Pakistan. Now the MUF asked votes in order to implement *Nizam-e Mustafa* (The Order of the Prophet). The fact of the matter is that the foundation of communal politics in Kashmir was actually laid by Mirza Afzal Baig. People of Kashmir fully remember the green handkerchief and cubes of rock salt, which Beg used to brandish in public rallies when

¹The Pandits have been demanding an inquiry into the event but without any result.

campaigning for NC elections. These were symbolic of Pakistan. After 1953, Baig used to seduce the audience in his speeches with these demonstrative antics. He persisted with his anti-Hindu rhetoric throughout that period.

However, after forging election partnership with Congress, Farooq could not continue to pursue his dichotomy. The role was left to the MUF. The NC had only one option to win the elections and that was of rigging. The government resorted to undemocratic ways of foiling attempts of some candidates of MUF to win assembly seats. Anti-Hindu lava gathered together dangerously, and it had to burst sooner or later. It was in 1990 that this belching lava engulfed Kashmir. A tiny spark was needed to ignite it. The spark came from Pakistan and its notorious ISI

Kashmir bureaucracy strongly contributed to this scenario. It was already overstuffed with such elements as relentlessly encouraged anti-India propensity. Not only that, even in some cases, some segments of bureaucracy were co-promoter of organized terror in Kashmir.

A resume

The beginning of Jammu and Kashmir freedom movement in 1931 had unfortunately begun with the loot and vandalizing of the Hindus of Vichar Nag and Maharaj Ganj. In 1989-90, the story was repeated. But this time its dimensions were much different. It is not correct to say that the 1990 events sprang all of a sudden. The fact is that ever since 1947 all political organizations and all political leaders fanned the flames of communalism for self-aggrandizement or for political aspirations. Prior to 1947, secular ideas of Sheikh Abdullah had created a ray of hope but after the attainment of freedom and coming to power, he too resorted to same antics and manipulations, which the Muslim Conference had pressed into service. He did so because he felt that that was the way in which he could perpetuate his

Sultanate over Jammu and Kashmir.¹ While fighting for power through democratic methods he, at the end of the day, succumbed to undemocratic ways and means. His old colleague Kashyapa Bandhu raised this issue several times in the meetings of the Working Committee. Many times he advised him not to mix up politics and religion. At one time he had suggested that the *Awqaf* (Muslim Endowment Trust) should be given in the hands of a religious organization without any interference from the Government. He had said that the ruling party adhering to the principle of secularism would get bogged down with religious affairs and thus would find itself distracted from addressing crucial administrative and political matters. Sheikh Abdullah rejected this suggestion. Kashyapa Bandhu left National Conference. In one of his speeches, the Sheikh had said that Islam is the sun and all other faiths are its satellites.

This was a startling transformation in the thinking of a leader who once was the standard bearer of secularism in the valley of Kashmir. It was the same Sheikh who had raised the resonant slogan of "Hindu-Muslim-Sikh *ettehad*" (Hindu-Muslim-Sikh unity). The fact is that in those days he was trying to win the trust and confidence of the people of the State. He used to raise slogans that suited his impending plans (without conviction *tr*). But it was a stupendous calumny, and today we, the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs of Kashmir, are facing its consequences. It is necessary to mention that Sheikh Abdullah never gave any importance to Kashmiri Hindus in Kashmir's social, economic and political life

¹It is strange that the author has not tried to analyse and lay bare the mind of Sheikh Abdullah while he was leading the anti-autocracy movement, during the process of transfer of power in October-November 1947, at the time of framing of the Indian Union Constitution and the period immediately preceding 1952. The letters of Kashyapa Bandhu written to the Sheikh before and after the accession throw a flood of light on how the Sheikh's mind worked. English translation of these letters made by this writer was published by the monthly *Kashmir Sentinel* in its issues in 2001

despite the fact that this community has been living in Kashmir for thousands of years. He often addressed them as "*dhimmis*"¹ (second grade citizen in a Muslim state) and desired to leave them to the mercy of the majority group. No religious harmony can be expected from superficial secularism based on this type of thinking. This accounts for the growth and spread of communal forces in Kashmir during the times of the Sheikh. Its first outburst took place in 1986.²

1990: funeral of hopes

Kashmir political leaders who succeeded Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, one and all left no stone unturned to nibble at political, social and economic rights of Kashmiri Hindus.

In 1975, Sheikh Abdullah began his second stint as Chief Minister. He gave clear instructions to his cabinet minister D.D. Thakur that the latter was free to recruit anybody in government service except the Kashmiri Hindus. One of the reasons for him to hate the Kashmiri Hindus was that the Pandits were peace loving and nationalists. All subsequent governments in the State systematically cut at the roots of Kashmiri Pandits. This policy, the desk-book formula for all subsequent governments in the State, remained in force and reached its peak in 1989. When terrorism surfaced in the valley in 1990, the Kashmiri Pandit minority became its first target. The valley was totally cleansed of the Hindus and Islamization of Kashmir was enforced on all levels. In the first

¹Non-Muslims living in an Islamic State are called *dhimmi*. They do not enjoy same rights and privileges as the Muslims do. The State is required to treat them as second class citizens. They are exempted from rendering military service (perhaps out of no trust) but for this exemption they have to pay the poll tax (*jizya*). Under Caliphate they were required to put a prominent coloured patch of cloth on their shoulder to distinguish them from the Muslims.

²Allusion is to the attacks on Hindu houses and temples in some villages in Anantnag on the behest of Mufti Saeed.

place, the Hindus were threatened and intimidated, which forced them to flee Kashmir. This was followed by their selective killing, loot and arson. Among the known Pandit personalities who fell to the bullets of the terrorists were men like Tika Lal Taploo,¹ Nilkanth Ganjoo², Prem Nath Bhatt³ and others, Enlightened and nationalist Hindus were butchered in broad daylight. In the length and breadth of the valley, the death dance was forced upon the Hindus. They were tortured and killed in barbaric manner. Even the Hindu women were not spared. A Hindu woman was cut into slices under machine saw. One thought that humanism had abandoned Kashmir and brutes and barbarians dominated the valley of flowers and verdure. Staff bearers of faith resorted to such barbaric and inhuman acts in the name of faith as would put humanism to shame. A gentle and experienced teacher and poet Sarvanand Kaul Premi and his son were kidnapped from his house. Nails were driven into his forehead. He was killed in most barbaric manner. His only fault was that throughout his life he had kept Kashmiriyyat and Kashmiri language close to his heart. Bushan Lal Aminu, Avtar Krishan Raina of Avel, Kulgam, Pushkar Nath of Bejbehara, Radhakrishan of Shurt, Radha Krishan of Ashmoji, and Moti Lal of Bhangund are some of the names that instantly come to my mind.⁴ All of these martyrs were brutally gunned down by the terrorists. What is most shameful and dastardly is that these terrorists also gunned down some of the kith of their victims who performed their death rites and cremated them. This was to strike fear and terror among the Hindus. Youthful and

¹BJP Chief, Kashmir Division

²Justice Nila Kanth Ganjoo, the Sessions Judge of Srinagar who had pronounced death sentence to Maqbul Bhat for killing Amar Chand of Nadihal, Baramulla, an officer in CID branch of J&K Police Department.

³A popular lawyer, social figure and a scholar from Anantnag.

⁴Panun Kashmir Movement has compiled a comprehensive list of the Pandits who were killed by the terrorist. They submitted a copy of the list to the National Human Rights Commission also. It has listed 1200 names and the brutal manner in which they were killed.

energetic Pandit boys who had accompanied the dead body of Tika Lal Taploo to the cremation ground were later on gunned down one by one.

For many centuries Kashmir has been the cradle of learning and spirituality. All of a sudden it was pushed into the demonic abyss of insanity. Kashmir has produced great spiritualists and humanists like Abhinav Gupta, Bhatta Kalat, Khemendra, Laleshwari, Shykhul-Alam¹, Ghausul-Azam, Dastgir Sahib, Parmanand and Ghani Kashamiri. But in the same Kashmir, most inhuman and barbaric treatment was meted out to a very small community the example of which one hardly finds in the annals of history. This is the saddest cut. Killing of innocent and unarmed people has been given the name of *jihad*. This insanity and religious frenzy were diametrically opposite to the Kashmirian tradition and life style and its values. Should we hold only Pakistan responsible for all this? I don't think it is the whole truth.²

Our political leadership and the central government both have to be held responsible. All that Pakistan did was to pour oil on the leaping flames. The situation surfaced because of downright irresponsible attitude of the state and central level leadership.

George Fernandez was the minister in charge of India's internal security at that time. In Srinagar, where he came to assess the ground situation, he went to the length of saying that the Muslims in Kashmir took to arms because the Kashmiri Hindus had dominated all walks of life. Tawlin Singh, S. Jha, Brij Bhardwaj, Ayesha Kigill, Kuldip Nair and other journalists of the ilk endorsed this canard. It is a matter of immense regret that these journalists did not have even one per cent knowledge about the ground realities. They had no feeling of the pain and privations of the victimized

¹I have already raised my doubts about the identity of this man.

²This is only a statement of facts. The author should have tried to analyse the deep contradiction in Kashmirian psyche. He should have gone to the roots of the problem. (*Translator's comment*)

people. Even they, too, thought that only the Hindus were the root cause of all the trouble. No human rights organization championing the cause of human rights here and there, ever uttered a word on the plight of the Hindus of Kashmir. Contrarily, they held Kashmiri Hindus responsible for all that was happening. No human rights organization spoke a word about this barbaric treatment of the Hindus. All raced to hold the Hindus responsible for the unfolding crisis.

Foreign hand

History of external players conspiring to force political instability in Kashmir is of long standing. From 1847 till today imperialist powers have been targeting it for their strategic and other interests. From the time when reins of power passed into the hands of Maharaja Gulab Singh, the British colonial power expressed in no ambiguous words its deep interest in the State. Later on, they installed their Resident in Kashmir conferring on him a wide range of powers. Then was incepted the British Trade Agency with overt objective of conducting trade with Central Asia. But in reality, this organization worked as British intelligence agency monitoring the moves of two big powers in the region, namely Russia and China. It aimed at neutralizing the influence of these two countries and their trading prospects. Soon after the passage of complete freedom resolution by the Indian National Congress, the British government began backing all communal and exploitative forces in Kashmir.

Soon after the partition of India in 1947, Pakistan launched an attack on Kashmir using frontier tribesmen as the vanguard. It was the Government of India that took Kashmir case to the UN. But instead of punishing Pakistan for her aggression against India, the UN adopted a method by which imperialist forces could find it easy for them to go on with their designs in Kashmir question. This provided them lever for instigating people in the name of religion so that they could find market for their weapon manufacturing and

marketing enterprise. They did not hesitate even to create a threat to India's integrity. These efforts shaped variously, Dixon Plan or appointment of Admiral Nimitz as Administrator. Sometimes the proposal of holding a referendum under the supervision of UN peacekeeping forces was floated. All this was aimed at damaging India's vital interests and her secularist image.¹

Not only Pak

However, in spite of all this, conspiracies of imperialists were defeated by the power and strength of Indian democracy. Pakistan launched its first attack on Kashmir in 1947 and repeated it in 1965. However, in both attempts she had to eat the humble pie. In 1971, Pakistan made yet another adventure, which too was repulsed by the people of India and the democratic movement of Kashmir. Pakistan never relented in her nefarious designs and intentions and used terrorism as its alternate strategy. Kashmir politicians had already deviated from those principles and ideals, which formed the real spirit of Naya Kashmir. Pakistan seized an opportunity in 1990. She invited our youth for receiving training on her soil in handling weapons and indulging in destructive activities in Kashmir. Pakistan had been defeated in an open war not once but thrice, and had no hope of a decisive victory in any future open war. Therefore, she resorted to a proxy war by inducting terrorists into the valley.

But honest introspection will reveal that we ourselves are responsible for all this. Kashmiri politicians deliberately kept political workers and masses dispossessed of democratic, progressive and scientific orientation. All that they were taught was hero-worship and personal loyalty as the meanest instruments. Contrary to promoting secular ideology,

¹For an insight into this phenomenon consult *Imperialist Maneuvers in Kashmir 1846-1947* by N.N. Raina, Link Publications, New Delhi. Also see Annexure III.

Kashmiri leaders incited religious sentiments of the people and always cared for protecting their vested interest. Examples of how personal loyalty could boomerang are rife particularly in the case of political career of Afzal Baig. Throughout his life, he stood by Sheikh Abdullah through thick and thin. He walked hand in hand with the Sheikh from day one of the freedom movement. But when he was suspected of creating an obstruction in the path of favoritism and family rule, he was not spared and thrown out from the party. When, in a rally in Hazuri Bagh, he tried to place before the public his contribution and the treatment meted out to him, National Conference musclemen disrupted the rally and denied him the freedom to speak. They created disorder and pelted stones on the podium. Hiding behind the collapsed *shamiana* (canopy), Afzal Baig somehow managed to run away to a place of safety.

6. 1990: The Great Deluge

When this kind of humiliating and coercive treatment was meted out to a stalwart NC leader like Afzal Baig, how could the "*dhimmi*"¹ Hindus feel convinced of their security and safety in the given arrangement? Whatever happened with the Hindus in 1990 is, in fact, the cumulative outcome of a long-standing political shortsightedness of Kashmir leadership.² There is hardly any need to explain who were the political leaders whose machination brought JK Liberation Front into existence. Who buttressed Jamat-e Islami and who inducted political uncertainty into the minds of the Kashmiri masses? They were the enemies within and they were the people who swore by secularist ideology yet acted with blatant communalism.³

Yet another amusing thing is that from 1947 to present day, every ruler in Kashmir concentrated on one and only

¹Non-Muslims in an Islamic State are given the status of *dhimmi*. They are not allowed to be part of the Islamic army and have to pay a tax for receiving official protection. They are treated as only second class and not equal citizens. See *Supra*.

²This is a contradiction. In previous parts of this work and in the following paragraph, the author has indicated that it was the policy of men in power to bring about obliteration of the Hindu minority of Kashmir. It was not political short-sightedness but extraordinary political awareness and determination.

³Amusingly the Union Government led by Congress usually overlooked communal propensities of the State Government and presented Kashmir to the world as its secularist model not realizing that this slogan carried in its womb destruction of the minuscule Hindu minority.

one aim — amassing as much wealth as he could. This aim was always given the first priority. Nobody seriously cared to apprise the masses of Jammu and Kashmir of nefarious designs and intentions of conspiratorial elements: nobody showed any interest in resisting and confronting malefactors. Yes, everybody tried to stoke the flames of hatred and stifling environs. When the situation went out of control in 1990, all leaders sat hands bound, and watched the naked dance of death like indifferent and unconcerned persons. Whatever happened in 1990 did not touch their skin. They are enjoying life even now as gleefully as they did before. Those who became the victims were the Kashmiri Hindus *en masse* and a handful of nationalist Muslims. All terrorist organizations, *JKLF*, *Hizbul-Mujahideen*, *Allah Tigers*, and Operation Balakot *et al* devoutly followed the main agenda of how the Hindu religious minority and a few nationalist Muslims of the valley should be uprooted and annihilated. How the Hindus should be reduced to the wretchedness of refugees banished from their native place. In winter of 1990, Kashmir environs resounded with slogans like this

Aseh chbuh banawun Pakistan

Bataw ros batehnew san

(We have to make (Kashmir) Pakistan/ Albeit without *Bhattas* (Hindus) but along with their *Bhattnehs* (womenfolk).

The slogan undoubtedly reveals what precisely lay in the deep recess of the mind of terrorist operatives and their supporters and mentors. There could be no worse moral degradation than the one in question.

The story of repression and tyranny unleashed against Kashmir Hindus goes back to six centuries. During the reign of Sultan Sikandar (*butshikan*) The Iconoclast, they were left with three options (a) run away (b) mix up or (c) face annihilation. Mixing up meant conversion and annihilation meant their wholesale massacre. From those distant times

down to 1990, the Hindus of Kashmir have been repeatedly forced to choose one of the three options. In 1990, they were forced to leave their home and hearth. How could a minuscule minority withstand the onslaught of unimaginable tyranny? The desire to protect life makes a man do what one never can imagine.

The *Al-Safa* in its issue of 13 April 1990 published a release. In it a warning was given to the Kashmiri Hindus that if they did not leave the valley within 24 hours, they would be massacred in cold blood. Look at the perfidy. On the one hand the Hindus were handed out life threats to leave immediately and on the other hand a disinformation campaign was started that the Hindus left on the behest of Jagmohan, the Governor of Kashmir at that point of time. What an incredible canard this is? Those who make such assertions want to throw dust into the eyes of the nation and the community. Have they forgotten that the mosques all over the valley were fitted with loud speakers, which buzzed with all sorts of threats to the Hindus? Today they try to feign ignorance of the slogans they had raised at that time like the following:

- *Jisko Kashmir mein rahna hai/ Allah o Akbar kahna hai*
(One who wants to live in Kashmir should recite Allah o Akbar or Muslim call for prayer)
- *Aye zalimo aye kafiro/Kashmir hamara chhorh do*
(Oh you tyrants and oh you infidels/ quit our Kashmir)
- *Kashmir mein kya chalega / Nizam-e Mustafa*
- *Hamen kya chahiye/ Nizam-e Musatafa*
(What will run in Kashmir/ Nizam-e Mustafa or the System of the Prophet? What do we want/Nizam-e-Mustafa)?
- *Jago jago sobh hui/jago jago sobh hui Chin ne bazi hari*
hai/ab Kashmir ki bari hai
(Rise it is morning/rise it is morning. China has lost the game/ now it is the turn of Kashmir)

Consider these words of a handbill issued by Peoples League:

Peoples League ka kya paygham/fath, azaadi aur Islam
(What is the message of Peoples League/ Victory, freedom and Islam)

Another flier says:

- *Islam hamara maqsad hai/Quran hamara dastgir hai/Jehad hamara rasta hai*
- (Islam is our object/Quran is our guiding principle (constitution) *jihad* is our path)
- Allah Tigers did not lag behind:
Allah o Akbar Musalmano jago/kafiro bhago jihad araha hai

(Allah o Akbar Oh Muslims awake, O infidels, take to your heels *jihad* is proceeding)

The struggle had begun for the realization of the objectives set forth in these slogans. One can imagine what would have been the lot of Hindu minority in such a surcharged environment. History will testify that prior to this event, if Pakistani cricket team lost a friendly match the Hindus were made to bear the brunt of the anger and wrath of the miscreants. Their houses were stoned. And if Pakistani team won the match, the Hindus would become objects of shameful taunts and humiliating insinuation.

For these zealots, a Kashmiri Hindu was not a Kashmiri but as Sheikh Abdullah labeled them, an Indian agent. Was this atmosphere conducive for the Hindus to live in? The Hindu had been told in plain words that there was no place for him in the *Nizam-e Mustafa* or the Islamic theocratic system. He had already a bitter experience of being treated a second-class citizen (*dhimmi*). At last in 1990, the Hindus had to leave their homes and hearths, their lands and properties, their shops and their orchards even the cremation grounds of their ancestors. It was indeed the destruction of a civilization.

Does any community on earth leave its ancestral place willingly? Does any community feel satisfied to replace its

peaceful and happy life by plight and suffering, destitution and misery which dog him in exile as a refugee in unknown places and among unknown people? Let common sense answer this question. May be an odd man is there who, out of his foolhardiness and perversion, would embark on such a disastrous course. But it is not conceivable in the case of a whole community whose antiquity is traced to thousands of years. A decision like that would be unnatural and illogical. It is not a moot point that although Kashmiri Hindu community did not fall in the category of capitalists yet it was not a beggar or a destitute community. It has hundred per cent literacy and all of them worked hard and with honesty to make both ends meet. That this community had to leave behind everything, their home and hearth and run away for safety of life and honour shows that it had been subjected to severest degree of subjugation and suppression for a long time.

Some of the members of this community were butchered in barbaric manner. One shudders to narrate the details. One such example is that of Brij Nath Koul of Harman village. In May 1990, Kauls wife and sister were kidnapped from their village. Both the young women were publicly molested. Their clothes were shredded into pieces and they were meted out incredibly shameful treatment. They were raped. After this inhuman act, the husband and wife were tied to a jeep in the village named Imam Sahib. The jeep was driven over the cobbled road during the day and with speed. The couple cried and begged for mercy for a while. They cried for help but nobody was willing to come to their rescue. Not only that, the onlookers in the neighborhood too looked at them with spite. They were dragged till their cries stopped and they breathed their last. There are many more barbaric stories like that and one needs reams of paper to record their details.

Equally tragic is the story of Bhushan Lal of Amaneh village. He went to Daksum to collect his salary. Terrorists lay in ambush before he would arrive in Daksum. They caught

him and took him to undisclosed place where he was subjected to torture. His ears were sliced, his tongue was pulled out and his eyes were gouged out. They pumped bullets into the bleeding and half dead body.

Nationalist Muslims were also selectively killed. Mir Mustafa, Ghulam Nabi Kullar, Abdus Sattar Ranjoor, Maulana Masudi, Molavi Farooq and some more leaders were killed in a barbaric manner. Fear and terror engulfed the whole of the valley.

There was a time when an appeal made in the name of religion did not impress ordinary Kashmir too much. From 1938 up to 1953 was a period in Kashmir history when people preferred Naya Kashmir programme to religious appeal. People reposed trust in Sheikh Abdullah. This slogan could be heard anywhere and everywhere in the valley in those days:

"Aleh karega wangan karga/Sher karega sher karega"
(Whether he makes us as insignificant as a pumpkin or a brinjal/ he is the father head let him do it)

The fact is that it was way back in 1951-52 that Kashmir political leadership had adopted anti-India stance as the benchmark of its policy. This campaign received strong impetus after the formation of Plebiscite Front. Activists of Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad-led National Conference were also following this line in order to establish a strong grip on the masses. Thus the lava was accumulating and simmering deep inside as days passed by.

The Sheikh had worn the mask of secularism but in fact he fought elections on communal basis. The poison, which he injected into the veins of the NC was bound to have its repercussions. A number of this organizations workers and activists have been gunned down. It indicated divergence between the word and the deed. One whose heart lies somewhere else from his tongue will meet that fate.

It will be recalled that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto swore by democratic dispensation but at the same time he managed to

declare the Ahmadis as non-Muslims. In this manner he struck at the roots of democracy in Pakistan. The result was that he had to pay with his life for this perfidy. He himself became the victim of his own dichotomy.

As a matter of political expediency, Indira Gandhi had raised the Frankenstein in Bhindranwale. She had to pay with her life. Today the NC is in an identical situation in Kashmir. Besides NC, other political parties are also burning their fingers in this fire.

As this dangerous situation developed in the valley, I happened to see Mir Qasim one day in Srinagar. I asked him what was going on in Kashmir. His reply was, "At the moment I am unconcerned with any political talk. I only offer *namaz*." Of course, he had to remain unconcerned because he had already played his effective role in building up this lava.

Villain of the piece

The Sheikh projected Farooq as his successor almost during his own lifetime. After his demise, Farooq wore the mantle of chief minister. Getting a wind of his political inexperience and naivete, state bureaucracy began to dominate the administrative structure almost arbitrarily. It ran the government the way it liked. Not to speak of eradicating deep-rooted problems of Kashmir politics, state political structure degenerated into a mess during Farooq's government.

The government of Ghulam Muhammad Shah came into being by bringing together some NC and Congress members. Of course this dispensation was possible through covert machinations of the centre. The lava accumulating through the instrumentality of Kashmir political leadership burst with a bang for the first time in 1986. Congress workers took a leading part in those riots. The houses of the Hindus in Dhanav, Bogund, Wanpoh, Kulgam and other places were torched. Dozens of Hindu temples were damaged and pulled

down. Congress President of the day, Mufti Muhammad Saeed, had two main objectives in unleashing assaults on the Hindus. One was to see that law and order machinery failed leading to the ouster of Ghulam Muhammad Shah. Second was to give vent to anti-Hindu hatred, which he had been nursing for a long time. He was in search of an opportunity and here was one at hand. This achievement was a certificate for him, which he cashed with V.P.Singh government. With the recommendation of Imam Bukhari, he became the home minister of this unfortunate nation. The carnage of 1986 is the first event of religious persecution and oppression, which the Hindus of Kashmir faced after the one during the Pathan rule. Mufti was the villain of the piece.

As early as 1986, Kashmiri Hindus had begun to feel insecure in their native land. Many of them had decided to move out of Kashmir and settle somewhere else in the country. They seriously realized that they were living in their homes not as its inmates but as strangers. They thought of themselves as unwanted and inconsequential entities, a valueless and meaningless lot. Kashmir's communal politics had given them an impression that Kashmir was a fief of a special group and the path across the Banihal pass was always open for them. For quite some time, it had become impossible for the Hindus to find a job and live with honour in Kashmir. Communal-minded politicians had already, under the impulse of two-nation theory and also the mask of secularism, chalked out an anti-Hindu agenda. They had been paralyzed in a number of ways.

When I became the Congress Tehsil Presidedent, Mir Qasim told me in advance that he would not accept inclusion of any such name in the list of candidates for government jobs as had worked in DNC for many years and without any remuneration. Once he bluntly told me that for Hindu candidates the whole of Hindustan was open. Gradually Hindu youth began to become victims of frustration and morbidity because of unemployment, idleness and

discrimination. On the one hand they were debilitated by economic hardships and on the other hand Kashmir communal and obscurant leadership cast its sadistic looks at them. Day in and day out, new conspiracies were hatched against them. In order to perpetuate this type of politics and to exacerbate it, all political parties in the state, Congress, NC, Jammat-e Islami and the rest made the Kashmiri Hindus a common target.

Refugees

Now this minuscule group of Kashmiri religious minority is living a miserable life in Jammu, Udhampur, Dehli and other towns of Hindustan. They are given a pittance in the name of financial support but a large number of them are destitute and nobody is prepared to listen to their woes. Those who are receiving nominal aid are to some extent able to ward off hunger but on the whole they are suffering the lack of many necessities of life.

Many are languishing in "Migrant"¹ camps. Others are pushed out of one rented accommodation to another. Bearing the hardships of destitution they are somehow struggling to keep two ends together. The citizens of a democracy and secular state have been made homeless in their own homes.

Canard

Dark clouds of disaster had spread over the skies of Kashmir in 1990. In the first week of January of that year, I went to Jammu in connection with some personal matter. This was the time of unbridled rumours and canards in Kashmir. Everybody had some thing fantastic to say. Some orchestrated that the Hindus were advised by Governor Jagmohan to leave Kashmir so that he would unleash engines of oppression against the Muslims. Sometimes it was

¹Hindus in exile refuse to be called "migrants". They are Internally Displaced Persons in accordance with the definition of the term in the UN lexicon.

rumoured that the Hindus were going to Jammu to receive training in arms. When I came to Jammu, a rumour was floated in my absence in Zainapora that Rishi Dev had met with Jagmohan in Jammu and had joined some Kashmiri Hindu rally crying for justice. Firstly, it is not true that I ever joined any rally of any type because all my family members were still living in Zainapora and I had only casually visited Jammu. I was engrossed in my personal work that I had no time to attend any other business.

Some Muslims of my area in Kashmir known to me had also come to Jammu at that time. We invariably met together everyday. They fully knew my whereabouts. But despite all this, rumors were spread to malign me. They went to such absurdity as to say that my photograph with the Governor had been taken. What a canard? And supposing it were so, was it a sin to have talked about the minority, which had been forced to the brink of annihilation?

Honestly, having heard these horrible stories, I could not muster courage to return to Kashmir. I came to know that terrorist organizations had put me number one in their hit list. Could I return to Kashmir? In the twinkling of an eye I found myself homeless and shelter-less like hundreds of thousands of Kashmiri Hindus. Ever since, I am thrown on the streets of Jammu.

In exile

In exile, too, I am not destined to have a respite. Financial relief-receiving "migrants" in Jammu are bearing the millstone of corruption. It is a classical example of lawlessness. While a corrupt administrative machine dogged Kashmiri Hindus, genuine and known secularists and nationalists were selectively targeted in this melee of general loot. Extending financial aid to the displaced and dispossessed Kashmir Hindus should have been a humanitarian act. But corrupt officers, middlemen and agents made it a very lucrative industry for themselves. The story

about the moneylenders and mortgagers stated elsewhere in this narrative was repeated in the case of relief distribution by relief department functionaries.

Interestingly, most of the employees connected with relief organization comprise Kashmir Hindus who had been uprooted from their native land precisely in the manner in which those were uprooted who came to them to receive their relief doles. These employees broke all record of bribery and corruption. At this calumny, one can only hang ones head in shame.

It is equally amusing that the government perpetuated its traditional communal policy even in this hour of unprecedented tragedy for the minority community. The Hindu refugees had to overcome numerous hurdles and go through tiresome process, greasing the palms of many functionaries in order to receive their petty dole of relief¹. Against this, unaccounted monies flowed to political leaders and organizations in the name of relief for the Muslim migrants. For them an industry had come into being. The Hindu refugees were required to submit their photographs and affidavits and pursue their cases through a nerve-breaking maze of red tape-ism. The Muslim migrants got their cheques through some political brokers without any need to go through this sordid process.

The gigantic fraud

The fact is that government functionaries and opportunist leaders had got their associates registered as migrants and secured accommodation for them in government buildings. Most of them are those who usually migrate to Jammu every year during winter months to find some work. More than ninety per cent of them are permanently residing in Kashmir

¹Most of the subordinate staff at the office of Relief Commissioner in Jammu comprises displaced Pandit employees of the J&K Government. They have become notorious for bribery.

valley. But having been registered clandestinely, they continue to receive the amount of relief. The credit of dividing "migrants" in the name of religion and giving them the name of Hindu "migrants and Muslim "migrants" goes entirely to the Congress party. Even in a catastrophic situation like the one under review, they did not desist from discriminatory politics on the basis of religion. This was one more riddle for the Kashmiri Hindus who have been voting for Congress since 1950.

In 1991, I happened to visit Delhi where I met with Marxist leader Harkishan Singh Surjeet. I conveyed to him the details of the tragic and heart-rending events of Kashmir. I told him in detail the reason for the Kashmiris to leave the valley. I narrated hair-raising instances of cold-blooded and barbaric murders and arson. I also told him of the excesses inflicted on Kashmiri "migrants" by the terrorists and also by the state government. My shock knew no bounds when I found that my narrative had no impact on Surjeet. He sidetracked the whole issue in one sentence, "These people (Hindus) are the supporters of BJP." I was stunned to hear this. I could hardly imagine that the terrorists and the party of Surjeet had a common agenda. This agenda allowed no space for the rights of peace-loving citizens. I already knew the real face of parties like NC and Congress hidden behind the mask of secularism. But Surjeet's comment also laid bare the real face of the Communist party swearing by socialism. I came to the conclusion that like other political activists these people were also coveting the seats of power and begged for votes. Kashmiri Hindus are numerically insignificant. Therefore they have no importance for political parties. Leave alone importance, the parties think that they have no right to exist.

Surjeet's brazen reply made it clear to me that even the stalwarts among our national leaders were deceitful and fraudulent. They were not guides but highway robbers. These people were parasites and a burden on the people, the society, the nation and the country. Even Sheikh Abdullah

who claimed to be the standard bearer of equality did not spare the Kashmiri Hindus. In his autobiography *Atash-e Chinar* he labeled them Indian agents and fifth columnists intending to slight their nationalism. Is it that one who is a nationalist and a patriot has no importance in our country? If anybody is there who has some importance he is only the anti-nationalist, a smuggler, a robber and a criminal. Alas, our community (Pandits) has not an iota of these elements.

Indeed it is sad that the reins of this country have gone into the hands of such political jokers as are non politicians but adepts at the chessboard of politics of treachery. They cannot demonstrate any sympathy and love for the country and its great traditions. It appears that they too are the running dogs of some invisible master. That is why they, too, ignore the voice of their conscience. Indeed they have mortgaged their minds to their mentors.

Media

This is also true of a section of our media persons of international fame. They present a picture of Kashmir in a ridiculous way, which is far removed from truth. I can recall writers like Khushwant Singh, Bidwai, Baweja, Tarkunde, P.S. Jha and somebody called Bose. They ignored the destitution of Kashmiri Pandits and nationalist Muslims. They never mustered courage to present their problems boldly and frankly. Journalists as those named above presented a picture of Kashmir that threw a cover on realities. Terrorists forced hundreds of thousands of Kashmiri Hindus and secularist Kashmiri Muslims of the valley to give up their orchards, residential houses, lands and business. Having caused destruction in Kashmir, the terrorists turned heat on Doda, Poonch and Rajouri. But our writers of the first rank chose to turn a blind eye to these events. It appears that these gentlemen, too, like some pseudo political leaders, shared business in a crucial nexus with some international conspirators. Of course, a true patriot is enjoined upon to

unravel the conspiracy failing which the Indian masses, owing to religious hatred, caste system and regionalism, will find themselves much weakened on all fronts and then become the sitting ducks for the warmongers and looters.

Students

The ongoing scenario has very adversely affected our student community. Chased from the valley, a big chunk of Kashmiri displaced persons took up residence in Jammu. With that the question of education of their children assumed threading proportions. The government refused to give the refugee students admission in local government schools and colleges. Separate Camp Colleges and schools were opened for them. These lacked basic facilities. Laboratory and library facilities were conspicuous by their absence. In the burning sun of summer months or in the bitter cold winds of winter, teen-aged boys and girls attended classes under the naked sky.

Apart from this, even the examination of students was deliberately complicated. The kind of discriminatory treatment meted out to them by the Education Department has no parallel anywhere in a democratic polity. Our students had to drag on for six years or even more to obtain degree for which the normal duration is three years. At one time, a proposal was under the consideration of Kashmir University authorities to set one question paper for Kashmir students and another for the displaced students. The aim was to set a very difficult and complicated question paper for the latter category and thus ways could be devised to deny them the benefit of obtaining merit. On the government level, all efforts were made to damage educational career of our students. Job opportunities for our students were already extremely limited in Kashmir but after the events of 1990, these opportunities shrank further for them.

Owing to stark chances of a livelihood, our youth had to move to other states in their struggle for survival. The word "migrant" - a word which has been used to describe them from the

administrative structure of J&K State. It would not let them stay in peace even in exile. The administrative structure is happy if the displaced Kashmiri Hindus remain dispersed so that not a trace of their existence in the valley is left.

Camps

After leaving Kashmir many families spent a number of years in tents. In the camps they were exposed to blowing winds, dust storms and pounding monsoon rains. Today, the inmates of these camps are provided pigeonhole accommodation. Sanitation and hygienic conditions in the camps are dismal. Harsh climate and inadequate and poor facilities have caused various physical and psychological disabilities to the displaced population. Not only the Kashmiri Hindu but the nationalist Muslim, too, is a victim in this environment of neglectful policy. They had to leave their home and hearth on the basis of their religious toleration. Those not provided tented or tenement accommodation by the government, have been forced to rent some private accommodation in Jammu city or other towns. The money, which they have to pay as rent is raised by drastically curtailing day-to-day necessities of their children and their own selves. The saga of their plight is much worse as they are left at the mercy of the landlords who can turn them out at their sweet will. Their life is hanging by a slender thread.

Record

Material produced on the plight of Kashmiri refugees is copious. Many of them, who had to run away from their native place owing to the threats from the terrorists, were unable to withstand the harsh climatic conditions and in the process lost their lives. Some of them died of sunstrokes and some of snakebites. Many became a prey of such fatal diseases as were unknown to them in Kashmir. The government was least concerned to take these appalling conditions into consideration and find a solution.

If a delegation of the displaced persons approached the concerned authority for the readdress of their grievance, the officer was reluctant to talk to them. Girish Chander Saxena became the Governor and All India Kashmiri Samaj deputed a delegation to call on him. It wanted to apprise him of the problems facing the refugees. After many hassles, the day and time for the meeting was fixed. On 16 June 1993, the delegation met with him. But before it would make the presentation, H.E. the Governor doled out a lengthy sermon and deliberately spoke hurting words like the following"

1. He could not displease the Muslims
2. He had no time to spare for a meeting with the Hindus.
3. If there are any complaints or problems, these should be submitted in writing.

This indicates that our rulers are bent upon dividing people along religious lines. Among these rulers are not only those from the valley but also the Governors sent from Delhi who consider themselves the Rajas of the masses of people.

My perils

I cooled heels at the doorsteps of many officers and political leaders in order to obtain some small accommodation for my family now living in exile. I was refused and ignored as if I never existed. I was getting seven hundred and fifty rupees as monthly pension in freedom fighter category. In this old age this amount was insufficient to sustain my wife and me. I thought if the government was generous to allot me a room somewhere, I would be able to save the rent money. The government was loath to extend to me even this small help. It had not even a one-room accommodation for me whereas the entire MLA hostel in Jammu was packed with terrorists accommodated under the patronizing wings of political leaders. I submitted a request to the Janata Dal president as well as the Governor of J&K. Another application was submitted to the Governor through the Congress President Ghulam Rasool Kar.

After my migration, terrorists blasted my ancestral house in Zainapora. The entire house including household goods was razed to ground. For this reason also I thought I had a right to ask the government for some small residential accommodation. I may mention that many political activists, with much less record of social service and contribution to freedom struggle than what I have, were provided with government accommodation. There were many among them who still live in Kashmir but have occupied accommodation provided by the government. I waited for a response to my request. It never came till this day.

Once I met Hamidullah Banihali, the Adviser to the Governor. Demonstrating fake sympathy towards me, he forwarded my application to Governor Zaki. Later on, I came to know that he was playing a trick with me and the sympathy he showed to me was only superficial.

With seven hundred and fifty rupees as freedom-fighter's monthly pension, my wife ailing and I looking after her, we are eking out a miserable life in our old age. Those who owe their political career to my efforts and persuasions are not only enjoying the comforts of government accommodation but are also looting the state exchequer in broad daylight. For example, I can point towards some communist party leaders in this category. What an irony of fate that for small government accommodation I had to approach the CPI (M) and CPI leaders also. They were hardly prepared to lend me an ear. Displacement of Hindus had lifted those (communist leaders) overnight from the depths of the earth to the heights of the sky. How were they going to be moved by my destitution? After all it was my saga of destitution that had brought them prosperity.

Plight of orchards owners

In the course of these events, an organization of displaced orchard owners of Kashmir was formed in Jammu under the name Fruit Growers Association. Jia Lala Geru was its

President. Once they desired all displaced orchard owners of Kashmir to submit full details of their holdings and the yield. I went to fill the requisite form in Geeta Bhavan, Jammu. Jiyalal Geru and other concerned people insisted on me to agree to be the president of the organization. They knew that I had contacts with almost all political leaders in Kashmir. They believed that my position as president would facilitate in making the administration accept their demands. I became its president.

This organization demanded that the government undertake protection of the orchards and compensation for the yield that had been looted. We approached almost all political organizations in the country requesting them to endorse our demand for the compensation of our losses. Conspicuous among these organizations were Congress, Janata Dal, CPI and BJP. Except Shri Kedarnath Sahni of BJP, no political party or MP responded to our plea.

I am greatly disappointed to record that Mufti Muhammad Saeed, who was the Home Minister at that point of time, and who has been my colleague in our political career, too, did not respond. He considered it below his dignity and improper even to send an acknowledgement of the registered memorandum. We held press conferences on several occasions but our genuine demands were ignored and brushed aside.

Interestingly, no stone was left unturned in providing monetary relief to Kashmir hoteliers and houseboat owners. A close look will show that their and our case was identical. In fact, comparatively, terrorism had taken a heavier toll of life and property of the Kashmiri Hindus. Our orchard losses were not only in terms of annual yield but more destruction had been caused to the fruit trees by wantonly cutting them down. We do not say why the hoteliers and houseboat owners were provided relief. All that we say is that if they deserved it, and rightly so, we also deserved it. Why this discriminatory treatment, one may ask?

After some time, some of my colleagues and I insisted on placing our demands before M.L. Kaul.¹ He had been asked by the government to examine the possibility of rehabilitation of the "migrants". We arrived at his residence in Gandhi Nagar but were told that the boss was resting and that we should come back after three hours. A couple of months later the same M.L. Kaul called a meeting of the "migrant" leaders of Anantnag and Pulwama in the Circuit House. I, too, happened to be present in it. The subject for discussion was the return of the "migrants". When my turn to speak came, without mincing words I told Kaul, "In Gandhi Nagar, you made us wait for three hours. If some untoward thing happens to us when back in Kashmir, can we make you rise from your deep slumber? A man who would make the supplicants wait for three hours, can he be a well-wisher and redeemer of the woes of "migrants"? He had no answer and cut a sorry figure.²

One more organization by the name Forum for Dialogue and Amity also came into being. Its aim was to restore on peoples level those relations among the people that were the crux of "Kashmiriyyat".³ I was chosen its Convener. Once I happened to meet with Mufti Muhammad Saeed in connection with this organization. He was not a minister at that time. I complained to him that it did not behoove freedom fighters claiming to be secular to divide people in the name of religion or to treat them discriminately. Kashmiri religious minority was not a vote bank. But it has suffered unimaginable atrocities and yet our political leaders ignore them. I sarcastically told him that the sapling of hatred, which he had planted in 1986 when he was the Congress

¹Financial Commissioner of J&K Government

²After his retirement as a senior State Department bureaucrat, this gentleman is reported to have managed a hefty sum from the State government for a project on the Pandit displacement.

³Kashmiriyat is one of the most misleading concepts behind which atrocities perpetrated against the Hindu minority in Kashmir are concealed.

president, had grown into a robust tree. I said that it was out of his 'benevolence that Kashmiri Hindus had to face destitution; had to face exodus from their beloved birthplace and were deprived of their land and property and spend the days of life in utter deprivation.

Return of NC

A couple of years ago, a popular government were installed under the leadership of NC. We revived our efforts to get our demands accepted. We met with concerned ministers, Safdar Baig, Pyarelal Handoo and Abdul Ahad Vakil. We requested them to consider our demands. We sent registered memorandum to the Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah. But not a finger moved till date. Of course we were told sadistically that the situation was returning to normal and now fruit bearing trees in the orchards of the Hindus were systematically cut. This was the level of normalcy, and obviously, when there are no orchards where is the need for us to lodge a complaint.

The government boasts of having put an end to militancy; it boasts that normalcy has returned to war-torn valley. To reinforce this fallacious propaganda, it exaggeratingly asserts that the elections were fair. I have a simple question. Who cast my vote and of my family members?

For many years the story of restoration of normalcy is orchestrated in a fine tune. But on the ground, situation is that the flames of terrorism have now engulfed Doda, Kishtwar, Poonch and Rajouri. That, however, should not be surprising. It had to happen because political charlatans have not changed their antics. They are already gripped by shortsightedness, and are polluting the environment further. Sometimes one wonders whether this is the same land on which valiant patriots like Chandra Shekhar, Bhagat Singh and Subhash Chandra Bose walked. Today we find that political demagogues have filled the space on all sides. Politics is no more a public service but a phenomenon of

nepotism and of amassing wealth. It has nothing to offer except personality cult, fraud, calumny and deception.

Many times people invited me to join their political organizations. But when I ruminate over the contours of current politics, I feel disenchanted. Once, Sheikh Nazir¹ invited me to join the National Conference. I said that if it were the NC of pre-1953 days, I would gladly join it. But the NC of today was markedly different from that of pre-1953. I told him that as we were the people of this earth, we could not think of living in high skies. I was obliged to decline his offer.

Current politics has sidelined honest and patriotic political workers. The reins of power have passed into the hands of political buffoons who want to drag Kashmiri people mentally two centuries backward. They think that building schools and roads is progress. They forget that material progress is incomplete as long as it is not supported by moral, intellectual and social values. All round progress is faulty if it does not encompass maturity of consciousness and political awakening, correct thinking and the sense of responsibility.

Unless politicians with these values come to the forefront to replace political charlatans and unless the youth is well read and fully aware of what scientific, development and progress mean the situation will remain as it is.

Suharwardy,² an MLA from Doda, said in the Legislative Assembly, "I am first a Musalman and then an Indian or a Kashmiri."³ This pattern of thinking shall have to be changed. Dark clouds of religious frenzy shall have to be removed from our mind. A war is to be fought against hunger, poverty and religious hatred. Society needs to be given a new shape based on equality and justice. Along with that, we have to

¹Secretary of National Conference

²Ataullah Suharwardy was NC MLA and minister from Doda district

³This is a near repetition of what Sheikh Abdullah had told Kashyapa Bandhu. See Kashyapa Bandhu's letters (tr) *Kashmir Sentinel*. Loc.cit.
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make an effort that international opinion brings pressure on Pakistan to change its obstinacy of interfering in the affairs of Kashmir. Those rendering lip service to secularism shall have to translate their words into deeds. As long as that is not done true secularists will remain suppressed in our State. Until that day dawns, Abdus Sattar Ranjoor and Ghulam Nabi Gilkar will continue to become the targets of terror.

Epilogue

A political movement in Jammu and Kashmir had begun in a revolutionary manner. But gradual induction of anti-revolutionary ideas in its programmes vitiated the minds of the people. As a result, ordinary people found themselves entangled in a plethora of problems. In contemporary days, Dr. Farooq Abdullah is playing a role side by side with the pioneers resisting foreign threats. But along with that, our leadership needs to uphold on ideological level the sentiments of honesty of purpose, fraternity and cooperation among the people. That is how we can release the masses of people from the clutches of conspiratorial elements and strengthen the process of democracy, tolerance and fraternity. Farooq Abdullah can defeat external conspiracies only when he disables the perfidy of tricksters, looters, communalists, conspirators and sychophants. Everybody should be affiliated to some community, region or class. If this mission is clear than one finds that the task ahead is one of uniting the people and not of dividing them.

We must bear in mind that the days of hollow and sentimental slogans are over. Scientific and technological revolution has made a big impact on human existences. Proliferation of productive forces has given rise to such elements in the contradictory, complex but vibrant system of social inequality as strive to earn more and more profits. This is the ultimate objective of their struggle. These elements become instruments of creating chaos, sectarian hatred and discrimination on the basis of cast and creed. They drag

people to the world of superstition, prejudice and depression. But they continue with their designs of loot and even strengthen its methodology. Whenever they find individuals organizing themselves for resistance, these forces assume tyrannical proportions and resort to suppressive mechanism.

In contemporary times, exploitative elements have raised organizations composed of criminals, goons, and sycophants. These elements can be deployed at any point of time and in any condition in order to strengthen the grip on power. Obviously, in this way they are successful in serving their interests.

In this widely prevailing atmosphere of hatred, atomic power has become another source of threat to human existence. Today we are also confronted with ecological contamination. Population is increasing by leaps and bounds. But our shortsighted and opportunistic politicians contrive to disallow ordinary people a deep thought into these issues. Instead, they entangle them in mundane and unnecessary issues and invent new instruments for that purpose.

What is needed is to produce such material, writings and works as would induce the youth to take into consideration the future of mankind. The youth shall have to become organized in a fierce struggle against unemployment, destitution, hunger and disease. No individual has to become just a spectator of this scenario but he should caution the people against impending dangers to humanity. It has to be driven into their head that all these debilities would prove a big hurdle in our path of progress. The people have first to be awoken and only then it will be possible to uproot the evil from human society through their cumulative power.

(This much for the time being)

The End

Annexure I

Gabe gabe haz khwan in qisseh-e parineh ra
Occasionally go on recounting this old story

IN KASHMIR
THE CONSPIRACY OF CONVERTING MUSLIMS INTO
A MINORITY

BACKGROUND AND FOREGROUND

THE HURRICANIC TIRADE OF HINDU COMMUNALISM
AND PREJUDICE

BY ABDUR-RAHIM RATHER M.L.A

*Chhupa kar astin main bijliyan rakhi hain gardun ne
 Anadil bagh ke ghaful na baitben ashiyanun main
 Watan ki fikr kar nadan museebat anewali hai
 Teri barbadiyun ke mashware hain asmanun main
 (Iqbal)*

(The arched sphere has concealed lightning in its sleeve
 Let not the nightingales of the garden sit carefree in their
 nests Oh the ignorant! Think of your homeland, the tragedy
 waits in wings Consultations for your destruction are being
 held in the skies)

In its previous session, the J&K Legislative Assembly drafted a bill in connection with the return of such Kashmiri citizens to the native land as had to leave their homeland against their free will and conspiratorial conditions and were forced to stay put outside Kashmir. Although this bill is an example of a very simple and straightforward piece of legislature, yet it worked up the mind of the Hindu communalists as if something were stirring up a hornet's nest. When intentions are tainted and minds tormented these do stick sometimes unwittingly and unnecessarily. The lava of acrimony and hatred billowing from the hearts and heads of communal Hindus at this point of time is in fact the result of the spark shown to it by this bill. The bombshell of prejudice and short-sightedness has exploded with a loud bang that takes an observer aback. Just and equitable commentators are shocked. Behind this harmless and commonplace bill, Hindu communalists of all levels and categories, and the Hindu press have raised a hue and cry. The hatred and animus of the Hindu communalists against the established leadership of Kashmir, and Kashmiri Muslims,¹ is nothing new. It is a more recent link in a comprehensive process.

¹Officially, National Conference never laid claim to the leadership of Kashmir Muslims. It was the Muslim Conference which did that.

In order to know the complexity (of this phenomenon), one will have to examine the history of the origin of this sore wherefrom hatred, enmity, prejudice and intolerance fester. The fact of the matter is that communal Hindus are afflicted with this disease since a long time. To be precise, this has been transmitted to them generation after generation. The situation at present is that this disease has become incurable. However, before we try to trace its roots, let us cast a glance on Resettlement Bill that has caused the latest stir.

Reasons for introducing the bill

Under the leadership of the founding-father of the freedom movement¹, namely Sher-i-Kashmir Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, the Muslim majority state of Jammu and Kashmir tied up with India, a secular country with Hindu majority as against Pakistan with Muslim majority.² A large number of the citizens of Kashmir got stuck up in that part which went to Pakistan.³ Prior to the partition, all roads leading out of Kashmir passed through the areas that became part of the new state of Pakistan. Kashmiris had their trade and saint-disciple (*pir-murid*) relations in the regions of Sialkot, Rawalpindi and Lahore. Cultural commonality and religious unity had strengthened and deepened these relations. But the partition came like a thunderbolt. Many Kashmiri Muslims got entrapped in the net of conspiratorial circumstances and against their free will. India and Pakistan came to loggerheads over Kashmir issue. All paths of return of this unfortunate and cast out people were blocked.

¹The Sheikh launched a movement for ousting Dogra (Hindu) rule over J&K State. His movement was not part of national struggle against the British colonial rule over India.

²The author has used the term 'tied up' and not 'acceded "...

³Large number of J&K State citizens of present PoK used to visit the cities that went to Pakistan after the partition and they returned or stayed back out of their free will.

Kashmir had acceded to India because she was given a guarantee that her citizens would be treated as honourable citizens of India without any discrimination on the basis of faith and community. The objectives of (Kashmir) freedom movement and the aspirations and urges of her citizens would find all opportunities of fulfillment. The special religious, cultural, social and political chemistry of the people (of Kashmir) would be maintained. When darkness descending from the clouds of partition gradually began to wane, the pitiable condition of the unfortunate Kashmiris stranded in Pakistan hurt us a lot. The father was separated from his son and the mother from her children. Young brides were separated from their grooms and so many families were left to suffer privations. Their cries of dejection went across the border to scratch the hearts of their kith. In 1952, members in Kashmir Assembly recounted soul-stirring stories of these innocent and forlorn Kashmiris and insisted that they should be brought back to their homeland.¹ The government of Sheikh Sahib fully sympathized with fine humanitarian sentiments (of the members). It was making efforts to reunite the forlorn sons and daughters of the homeland with their near and dear ones. He took up the matter with Jawaharlal Nehru and his government

After the partition of the country, the Government of India framed a law, which allowed any Muslim who had migrated to Pakistan, to resume his Indian citizenship if he so desired after obtaining permission from the Government of India. But the State of Jammu and Kashmir was kept outside the ambit of this law. The State enjoyed special status. In the state assembly, seats had been reserved for the people who had

¹The Sheikh had begun to show a change of mind soon after his return from Lake Success where he found that India did not get the support of either USA or UK on Kashmir issue. He also wanted to make amends to his unjust treatment towards his political opponents whom he had sent into exile. Hence his new found sympathy with them is clear. See also Annexure III.

crossed the cease-fire line.¹ The New Delhi Agreement (1952) between Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah and the Union Government was signed in order to elaborate and ratify the special position of Jammu and Kashmir. This agreement stipulated that Kashmiris held up in Pakistan would continue to retain Indian citizenship but the power of framing rules and regulations of their return would rest with the J&K Legislative Assembly.² In the light of this agreement, a special amendment was made to the Indian Constitution in 1954. Article 7 Sub 2 recognized the right of the Kashmiri citizens to return to homeland and resume Indian citizenship. Again, the State Legislature was empowered to frame proper laws in this connection. The Delhi Agreement was a red rag to the communalists in India and in the State.³ A network of conspiracies against the established Kashmir leadership was launched which had in its fold many high ups in the Centre. Before the State Assembly could frame laws for the return of Kashmiris stranded in Pakistan,⁴ the episode of 9 August 1953

¹Seats in JK Legislative Assembly were reserved for the people of the part of J&K State falling under illegal occupation of Pakistan and not for those who had crossed the cease fire line.

²The text of 1952 Agreement is very controversial. There are various interpretations mostly conflicting.

³Many political parties and thinkers at that time demanded that the State Government and the Government of India clarify the status of the Hindus and Sikh who had been thrown out of the present PoK, which formed part of the original J&K State. Interestingly, it should be reminded that thousands of Hindus and Sikhs from PoK who sought refuge from the attacks of tribesmen on Muzaffarabad, Domel, Mansehra, Chakothi etc. came to Srinagar but the Sheikh, then as Chief Administrator, ordered them to pack up and sent them to Jammu. He did not allow them to stay in Kashmir Valley. This caused resentment among many Indian leaders and Indian political parties.

⁴The question of return of "stranded" Kashmiris was not raised by the Sheikh for next five years. Nor did the "stranded" people approach either the Pakistani or the Indian government or an international agency like the UN for their repatriation. Maulavi Yusuf Shah rose to become the President of "Azad Kashmir" Was he a "stranded" Kashmiri?

took place. The champion of the aspirations of Kashmir, Sheikh Muhammad Abdulla was arrested. Kashmir's genuine and credible voice was stifled.¹ After the event of 1953, puppet governments that pleased the Hindu communalists remained in place.² These³ governments danced to their tune. They consigned the law pertaining to the return of Kashmiri Muslims to oblivion. In 1977, Sheikh Abdullah's party (NC) won a landslide victory in State Assembly elections. He decided to make proper amends to a shortcoming in the existing laws of the State. On the other hand, some Kashmiri Muslims, having obtained visa, came from Pakistan and took recourse to the provisions of the Indian and State constitutions that govern the return (of stranded people). Law courts were faced with a piquant situation. This necessitated removing the shortcoming in the existing laws. Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, then chief minister of the State, took up this serious humanitarian issue

¹The reason why the Government of India took that decision is now fully told in the works of Kashmir history. What was stifled was the voice for Kashmir Sultanate and not the voice for democratic and secular Kashmir.

²One cannot fail to mark the contradiction. The Sheikh supported accession to India because India was a secular democracy. And when the Sheikh had to be arrested for obvious reasons, India is seen a "Hindu communalist" state. It clearly means that the meaning of "secularism" for the Sheikh and his followers was different from what it was for the Indian leadership. It was Congress, a secular and a non-Hindu party that was ruling in Delhi and that had taken the decision of arresting the Sheikh. The two senior most members of the Indian Cabinet who were instrumental in the Sheikh's arrest were Muslims, namely Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Rafiuddin Kidwai.

³The Governments of Bakhshi, Shamsuddin, Sadiq, Mir Qasim, Sheikh Abdullah, Farooq Abdullah, Mufti Saeed and now Ghulam Nabi Azad followed thereafter. The writer brands all of them as puppet governments dancing to the tune of Hindu communalists. Except for a brief stint of 5 years, it is the Congress that mostly remained in power at the centre. If the Congress, too, is a Hindu communalist party, then the question arises why did National Conference agree to Kashmir's accession to Indian Union in 1947 when Congress — a communalist party — was ruling the roost?

with the Indian Prime Minister, Morarji Desai.¹ He reminded him of Delhi Agreement and the trust, which Kashmiri Muslims had reposed in secular India at the time of the accession of the State. Sheikh Sahib told the Prime Minister that the eyes of aged Kashmiris stranded in Pakistan had virtually stoned in their long wait to see the face of their separated dear ones. They now want to somehow carry the skeleton of their bodies to Jammu and Kashmir and find a burial place for the same in their dear motherland and to rest in permanent peace (there). Mothers wanted to marry off their daughters. Aged husbands wanted to rejoin their aged wives whom they were forced to leave behind long ago when the nuptial was tied.²

In 1980, this writer submitted to the Legislative Assembly the draft law that would remove discrepancy in existing legal specifications and allow stranded Kashmiris in Pakistan to return to their native land.³ This draft law was fully compatible with the State constitution, and genuine rights of the State subjects. Apart from its political dimension, the draft law was supposed to take care of many constitutional and legal complexities. The State Legislative Assembly gave very careful thought to it and after making necessary amendments entrusted it to a representative Select Committee in which the opposition party representatives were included. This happened in 1981. Although the State government was not

¹The Sheikh did not take up the issue of 700,000 Hindus and Sikhs extirpated from their homeland in PoK? He meticulously avoided linking this issue to the resettlement case.

²The Sheikh did not tell the Prime Minister that the Hindu and Sikh girls forcibly captured and converted in PoK and married to Muslims, too, longed to return to their parents, brothers, sisters, and relatives from whom they were forcibly separated, converted and married to Muslims. They also longed to return to their original faith.

³That draft did not carry a word about the Hindus and Sikhs hounded out of their homes in PoK or of their left behind properties. The State government has refused to grant them state subject status under one or the other pretext.

subject to any constitutional or legal binding to seek the opinion of the Centre on the draft bill, yet since its intentions were clear and correct, it decided to take the Central Government into confidence.

Some Kashmiri migrants returned from Pakistan to Kashmir and they knocked at the doors of the State and national courts for their civil rights. The Union and the State Governments were asked by the concerned courts to clarify the matter. The central government had no answer to the genuine questions raised in the courts. The State Government entered into consultations with the Central Government in the matter. Since it had become essential to remove legal discrepancies in regard to the correct position of civil rights of the Kashmiris living in Pakistan when they decided to return, the State Government brought the matter before the State Assembly desiring to seek the opinion of the Central Government.

In October 1981, copies of the bill were forwarded to the Union Home and Law Ministries with the intention that they would give due thought to its constitutional and legal aspects in order to avoid any misunderstanding. The State Law Secretary and Advocate General attended the court hearing in concerned courts where the cases were being heard. These legal experts also took the opportunity of exchanging ideas with the legal experts of the Central Government in connection with the Bill. The purpose of these informal exchanges was to apprise the Central Government of the perceptions and ideas of the State Government on the subject, and to seek legal opinion of experts. The Central Government could not find any lacunae in the draft bill.

Two years passed by and in March 1982, the draft bill was received back from the Select Committee in the Legislative Assembly. The Select Committee had unanimously opined that the draft was recommended for acceptance as an Act. Since the draft bill was fully compatible with the spirit of the State and the Union Constitutions, and was likely to overcome one big discrepancy in the existing laws that had become the

source of friction between the State and the Central Government, the State Government endorsed the bill. This was to solve the human problem of the Kashmiris stranded in Pakistan. In the beginning of the year (1982) the Assembly passed the bill in its Jammu session.¹ Thereafter, following the constitutional propriety, it was sent to the Governor for his assent.

The Bill, as it is, is fully compatible with the State and the Union Constitutional provisions. Moreover, it also conforms to the understanding and promises made by the State with the Centre. There are no constitutional or legal lacunae in it. It has not been passed in secrecy or in a hush-hush manner. There is no bad intention lurking behind it. But despite all this, the Hindu communalists² began to raise hue and cry. They want to influence the State Governor by their loud cries and tantrum expecting that the Governor would trample under foot his constitutional obligations and decline to give his assent to the bill. The passage of the Bill landed the Hindu communal sections into a state of frustration. They describe it a conspiracy against the security of the country and integrity of the State. A glance at the objections raised by them will explain their frustration and irrelevance of their stand.

The first objection of the communalists is that the bill contravenes the clauses of the constitution. If it is so, why don't they challenge it in the highest court of law in this country? The Supreme Court is the proper forum for interpreting, commenting and protecting the constitution.

¹It will be noted that this bill took just two years from the day it was introduced in the Assembly to the day it was passed by the house. On the other hand the case of granting state subject status to the Hindus and Sikhs hounded out of PoK hangs fire for last sixty years.

²The author does not discriminate between political opponents and Hindu communalists. The spirit of this monograph fully shows that National Conference was not prepared to tolerate political dissent just because the Sheikh had won by a landslide majority of 77 per cent of votes. Hence all opposition is dubbed as Hindu communalists.

A Governor is the agent of the constitution and subordinate to it. He has not the powers to reject a considered decision of the elected assembly. He is subordinate to the constitution and to the constitutionally elected institutions. He cannot be expected to function like a policeman of the law-making body. It, therefore, follows that if anybody has any doubt about the validity of the bill, he can seek redress of his doubts from the highest court of law in the country. But when these communal friends think of going to the Supreme Court, they begin to shiver in their trousers. It is just because they can easily gauge the weakness of their case and the fragility of their arguments.

The State Legislative Assembly, elected by the people of the State, has passed the bill after going through a serious process and debate. It symbolizes the will of the people and epitomizes their sovereign authority. Those who raise a hue and cry on this law are actually trying to distort the voting rights of the people of the State. In doing so, they demonstrate their propensity towards authoritarianism and not democracy.

It is alleged that the State ruling party passed the bill as an election stunt and thereby wanted to garner more Muslim votes. A slightly careful analysis will explode the bottom of this myth. The fact that Sher-i-Kashmir Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah enjoys full trust of the Muslims of the Jammu and Kashmir State is not hidden from anybody. This reality has been proved a number of times and need not be tested again. Therefore, he had no need to make strenuous efforts to bring the Muslims within the fold of good will for him.¹ But, of course, non-Muslims of Jammu generally look to the parties

¹One is reminded of the amusing statement of Bakhshi. Asked how many people were with him and how many with the Sheikh, he said, "Forty lakh with me, forty lakh with the Sheikh and forty lakh with Sadiq" What a fascinating psycho-analysis! Forty lakh was the total population of the State at that time.

opposed to National Conference.¹ They cast most of their votes to these anti-National Conference parties. Simple logic says that Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah and the National Conference should find ways and means of winning the maximum votes of the non-Muslims. Thus if it is the purpose of Sheikh Sahib to win votes in the elections, then this bill cannot serve any purpose because there are some apprehensions about it in the minds of the non-Muslims and some more apprehensions are created.

The fact of the matter is that by creating a variety of apprehensions, communal Hindus want to put non-Muslims of Jammu in a state of suspense. The aim is to overshadow their considered opinion by a wave of emotions in order to re-establish their lost credibility. They would like to make it an election stunt in order to beg for votes in favour of their purposeless parties.

Reasons of conflict and confrontation

What has been said in the foregoing lines is the legal and constitutional aspect of the matter. This brings forth only one-sided and incomplete picture of the prevailing situation. In order to view the issue in its proper perspective, it is necessary to take note of its political and historical aspects. The truth is that this is a new shape of old and sustained strife between India's secular and communal forces. Those who want to play communal game, while making the bill an issue, have indeed no commitment to secular dispensation in India. They are prompted and instigated by the forces of darkness and communalism that besmeared their hands with the blood of a great Indian like Mahatma Gandhi; those who repeatedly set the Indian constitution on flames in public, those who want to change the demographic complexion of the Muslim majority State of Kashmir by changing the ratio of population

¹An over-view of J&K elections from 1953 up to present day falsifies this assertion.

so as to transform the Muslims (of Kashmir) into a helpless destitute minority. The pages of history stand a witness to the repeated conspiracies of denuding Kashmir of its Muslim population and upsetting the balance of (existing) population in Kashmir.

(But) Kashmiri Muslim is a difficult-to-break person. Despite these dangers and conspiracies, he continues to carry on his identity and personality even when limping. The Hindu communalists do not even like to let him exist with wounded personality. But the Hindu communalists wanting to remove the eyesore would see that their old time agenda is accomplished as early as possible. They want to clear Kashmir of the very existence of the Muslims. In this connection their strategy is triangular. This may be elucidated in the Kashmiri saying viz. "*tsalun, galun ya ralun*" meaning "to run away or to get decimated or to assimilate."¹

An alarming aspect of the issue is that apart from these efforts, fresh bitterness, heat and escalation have been added to it. The mission has changed its contours and has appeared with more venom. Old hunters are spreading out new nets. Their inherent desire is to change the ratio of Kashmir population permanently and turn the Muslim (of Kashmir) into a minority so that their status is nothing better than

²⁰A layman might ask a simple question. With this perception of India, what were the compulsions for the NC leadership to sign several accords with Indian leadership over the years and not openly ask for secession? If NC really believed in Indian secularism, the Sheikh had no need to force Article 370 on Nehru. He had no need to ask for special status for J&K. By insisting on Article 370 and special status, the Sheikh demonstrated that he did not have faith in Indian secularism and hence must take care of Muslim interests while projecting himself as a secularist. If Kashmiri Muslims, (being a majority on State level) had apprehensions of Hindu majoritarianism and hence the special status, by the same logic the Hindu minority of Kashmir had apprehensions from the local Muslim majority. No constitutional safeguards were provided to them. History has proved their apprehensions were genuine. Who have been ethnically cleansed from the valley, Muslims or Hindus?

waiters, footmen and servants of new colonizers. More recent events have accelerated the intensity and seriousness of these ominous dangers. This makes it necessary that the Kashmiris should make a proper analysis of the situation. Victory or defeat is a matter of luck but the condition of faith and destiny is to resist and confront.¹ More than that is the proper awareness of the situation in order to keep one properly armed and alert.² God forbid, if we are to get drowned in the whirlpool of disaster, at least we should be able to take the name of God at the time of breathing our last.³ This has necessitated reproducing some pages of the history in this context. What better beginning can be made for this effort than quoting a verse of Allama Iqbal:

*Apne man main doob kar pa ja suraghe zindagi
Tu agar banta nahin mera na ban apna to ban*

(Plunge deep in you own mind in order to find the clue to life. If you do not come into my fold, you may not but at lest be of your own)

Kashmir for Kashmiris

Kashmir has always been dear to her natives. That is why despite enduring epochs of oppression and innumerable tyrannies, they never liked to separate from her affectionate bosom. A French-descended British Queen had said that if her heart was ripped open after her death, Calais would be found engraved on it. Every Kashmiri, at the time of his death, sustains a lurking desire of getting assimilated in the bosom of Kashmir. If you do not trust me, then let me tell you the story of the graves of Kashmiris in Muzaffarabad, Rawalpindi and

¹This is precisely the language of Islamic *jihadis* drawn from the holy book.

²The events of 1990 vindicated these hopes when ethnic cleansing of the Hindus in the valley was accomplished.

³These utterances are almost akin to those we heard the Muslim League leaders conveying to their followers on the eve of partition of India.

Lahore. These graves chant the dirge of the sons of Kashmir who remained concealed in their bosom. These dead bodies have been buried there as a trust. Those dead bodies had, at the time of their death, made a will that they are given a temporary burial. When conditions improve, they are given the shroud of the soil of Mother Kashmir. This would be the only way to bring them peace. Among these people are Mir Waiz Muhammad Yusuf Shah, Mir Maqbul Gilani, Khwaja Ghulam Nabi Gilkar and Muhammad Yusuf Qureshi.¹

This is new-found emotionalism of Kashmiris. A thousand years ago, great poet of Kashmirian descent, Bilhan also gave vent to the same emotions in his Sanskrit poems. He travelled all the way to Deccan and became the poet laureate of the ruler of those lands. But there also, he remembered with profound intensity his village Khonmuh and the saffron fields and green groves of Kashmir. He prayed with a sighing heart for returning to Kashmir. The great Kashmirian king Sultan Zainu l-'Abidin could feel the pulse of the deep sentiments and the pitiable condition of his compatriots. He sent emissaries to Karnataka and the Bengal to recall those Kashmiri Brahmans back to their native land who displeased

¹Islam doesn't recognize motherland or homeland nor does it recognize any community except that of *ummah*. Moreover Muslims are told that wherever they plant their feet that is their land. One wonders that while the author is fighting the cause of Kashmiri Muslims all the time, he forgets the basic teachings of Islam and remains glued to Kashmir. He wants the bones of all Kashmiris who died in Pakistan and remain buried there to be exhumed and brought to Kashmir and re-buried there in order to satisfy the urge for the native land. It is reminded that when Tariq leading a strong Armada disembarked on the shores of Spain, he ordered the soldiers to come on to the land and burn the boats in which they had sailed. On asking the sense in this strange command, he told them "Any country is our country because it is our God's country" (*bar mulk mulke mast kib mulke kbudaye mast*). It should be noted that Maulavi Yusuf Shah, the Mir Waiz of Kashmir was a staunch political opponent of the Sheikh. He knew that the Sheikh was intolerant towards his political opponents and was forced to leave Kashmir and go to Muzaffarabad. This is true of others as well. We have already referred to it earlier. Those who sent them into exile were the leaders of NC.

owing to some previous events had departed from Kashmir.¹ Zainu l-'Abidin called back those Pandits with affection and love. On arrival back in Kashmir, they were given a warm reception and were meted out sympathetic treatment. He bestowed upon them honour and gave away prizes. In this act of munificence he recorded for future generations a message of light in the letters of gold. The letters were that Kashmir belongs to Kashmiris and the noble sons of Kashmir could neither be separated from this soil nor shall they ever remain unmindful of their Motherland.

The master of conspiracies

A long, dreary and dark night of slavery began in Kashmir with the occupation of this land by the foreigners.² How, during this traumatic period of slavery, the identity of the Kashmiris was sought to be destroyed is a taxing and nerve-breaking labour. But we shall briefly refer to a few events of that history from 1846.

Gulab Singh took a step that has no parallel in the world history; through a sale deed he purchased the Kashmiris.³ Along with that he began indulging in inhuman crime of forcing a change of population ratio. Gulab Singh had succeeded in grabbing Kashmir by forming nexus with the

¹They were not displeased with anything; they were forced to leave their home and hearth owing to persecution by Sikandar the Iconoclast. While they left owing to religious persecution, those for whom the Bill seeks redress had left owing to political persecution by State authorities.

²Foreign occupation began in A.D. 1339 when the indigenous ruling house was replaced by a fugitive from Swat turned commander. Some historians observe that Kashmiris are adepts in inviting foreigners to rule over them; the Shahmiris, the Baihaqi Sayyids, the Chaks, the Mughals, the Afghans, the Sikhs, and lately the Indians, all were invited by Kashmiris to come and establish their sway over the people.. For the last option, the NC played a decisive role.

³It may be reminded that several West Coast States like Texas and California of the United States were purchased and assimilated into the Union. Kashmir is not a lone case of sale of land and people. Alaska is a more recent example.

British. On his first arrival in Kashmir, local people¹ offered him tough resistance and brought down his commander Wazir Lakhpat on the Maisuma ground (battlefield). His grave at that place today stands witness to his defeat. The British colonial forces launched an attack on Kashmir and gave the leash of the Kashmiris in the hands of Gulab Singh. Gulab Singh knew that he had come to Kashmir as a usurper² and that the Kashmiris would not bear his submission for a long time. He found that the means of sustaining himself in the seat of power lay in changing the ratio of the population of Kashmir³ and in turning the Muslims into a helpless minority. The first step in this direction was to begin the genocide of the Muslims.⁴ The Muslim blood became so cheap in this period that if a non-resident committed a murder (of a native) he was let off after paying a few rupees (as fine).

Gulab Singh did not live long to rule over Kashmir. But even during the short period for which he was in power, he left no stone unturned to bring about the genocide of the Muslim majority of Kashmir. Outside visitors of those days reported that the dead bodies of Kashmiri Muslims were often seen hanging by poles or dangling by rope at Zena Kadal⁵ so that other defiant people would take a lesson from it.⁶ A solution of the famine was found in taking boatful of Muslims to be drowned in the Dal and Wular lakes. Gulab Singh ordered that a freedom-loving Muslim be fleeced. Crown prince Ranbir Singh could not bear this scene and turned his head to other side. Gulab Singh slapped him in

¹Not the local people but the Afghan Governor and his Afghan soldiers gave him a tough resistance.

²He was no more an usurper than Shahmir (1339), Sayyid Mahmud Baihaqi, Kaji Chak, Akbar, and others were.

³As was done earlier by Sikandar Butshikan, Seh Bhat, Musa Raina, Shamsu'd-Din Araki and others.

⁴According to the Census Report of 1981, the population of Muslims in J&K has increased by 27 % since 1947

⁵Old time 3rd bridge over the river Jhelum in Srinagar

⁶This is precisely what the terrorists did with Kashmiri Pandits in 1990.

public and told him admonishingly that he shall have to develop the habit of witnessing such (gruesome) scenes because in days to come he shall have to resort to such measures time and again. The Kashmiri Muslims were made the only targets of the tyrannical corvee system (*begar*) or forced labour introduced during Gulab Singhs time. Only they were made to carry load for the army like the beasts of burden. The Pandits were exempted from this forced labour system because they were Brahmans and extracting any service from them was not permissible under the law of *dharmā*.¹ Village after village of Muslim population came to be destroyed because the healthy and able-bodied earning members of the Muslim families were taken like bonded labourers over mountains to Bonji and Gilgit. Dr. Thompson an Englishman has drawn the picture of this heart-rending situation in 1852-53. He writes:

After Gund, the Sindh valley stands desolated. Villages are ghostly and their fields are desolate. This indicates that the population is diminishing rapidly. After reading the description given by earlier travellers and then comparing that with the present situation, it becomes clear that in comparison to the times of the Mughal Emperors, present day desolation of the area is loud and manifest.

The fertile brain of Gulab Singh hit upon another plan of changing the demographic complexion of Kashmir. It was of gradually converting Kashmir into a colony. On one hand, the people were to be massacred or driven out of the valley through forced labour and on the other hand small habitations of his relatives and loyalists were planted in the length and breadth of Kashmir. The Mian Rajput settlements were set up in Kashmir. These people were granted large fiefs (*jagirs*) and they were given the authority to arbitrate over the

¹Such exceptions are not unknown in history. In Muslim States, the non-Muslims are categorized as *dhimmi* and singled out for payment of tax. The Jews in an Islamic State needed to wear a special robe with a yellow patch affixed to the shoulder to distinguish them from the Muslims.

properties, lands, honour, families and livestock of poor Kashmiris. The circles of these colonies gradually spread like the scars of small pox. Even today, their remnants are to be found in Sayyid pora (Shupian) and Singhpora (Sonawari).¹

However this scheme did not fructify fully because the remedy, which the helpless, destitute and enchained Kashmiris could not find was brought about by the hellish winter of Kashmir. These sunburnt fellows (Hindus) were not used to the hardships of severe winters. Their hand and feet got swollen (because of frost bite) during winter and they would catch bronchitis. There were some deaths among them. Thus these people who had a windfall, abandoned their *jagirs* and left the place. Kashmir winter proved a heaven-sent curse for them precisely in a manner in which the bitter winter of Russia proved disastrous for Napoleon and Hitler. Hargopal Khasteh writes that the Mian Rajputs had the freedom of murdering the Kashmiris (Muslims) and they were not answerable for this criminal act. No law put a binding on Mian Rajputs.²

The death of Gulab Singh was no less a curse for the Kashmiris than his life. The Pandits told his successor Ranbir Singh that the soul of his father had entered a fish and had got entwined in the circle of death and rebirth. As such, fishing was banned in Kashmir. This calamity reached its peak in the

¹The author has not given us the numerical strength of these Rajput families. According to information available not more than a dozen families settled down in these two places and even these dwindled with the passage of time. Does settling a dozen families of Rajputs in the valley during Gulab Singh's time mean changing the demographic complexion of Kashmir and converting Muslims into a minority? If yes, then what will the author have to say of 27 thousand Kashmiri Muslim families settled in Jammu since 1990 till date (2007)?

²Dervishes and Sufis, the companions' and followers of Shamsu'd-Din Araki were free to destroy and burn Hindu temples and convert and kill Hindus with tacit support from Muslim bureaucracy and official apparatus in the closing years of 15th century. See *Tohfatu'l-Abbab*, Chapter IV, Urdu translation by Akhund, published in Pakistan.

famine of 1867. If any Kashmiri headed towards a waterway to catch a fish and remove his hunger, the official watchman caught hold of him and taught him a lesson. A contemporary paper *Indian Public Union* drew the following picture of the situation:

An Englishman was boating in river Jhelum. Those were the days of a famine in Kashmir. He found that three Kashmiris in chains at a desolate place were only half clad. Necklaces of rotten fish were thrown round their necks. They were left for three days and three nights to the offensive smell of the putrid fish. Nothing was offered them to eat or to drink and survive. Their fault was that they had caught some fish just to satiate their hunger. In Kashmir, not only fish, but every kind of meat and chicken is prohibited for eating.

Ranbir Singh was even extorting tax money from those dying of cholera or famine not to speak about giving them some concessions. Anybody venturing to defy his orders would meet the punishment of getting fleeced. Folk tradition has reflected these very sentiments in the Kashmiri idiom which runs as this *bateb bateb teh pyadeb pateb* meaning on the one hand there is scramble for eatables and on the other hand the gendarmes demand their pound of flesh.¹ An epidemic also spread along with famine in Kashmir in 1887. A missionary doctor has described this calamity:

When cholera epidemic took the toll of family after family, a public announcement was made in the town that the Maharaja had found an effective cure of the disease. What was it? It was secret talisman (mantra) costing four annas a piece. If anybody hesitated to pay four annas and buy the talisman, it would be stuck to his door and four annas were realized from him ...

Not only that, on the one hand famine was decimating the population, and on the other hand the Maharaja was

¹Most of the idioms, folk punches, satires and repartees in Kashmiri trace their origin to the days of Hindu period. See *Rajatarangini*, tr. Stein 2 vols. 1897.

exploiting this natural calamity. According to Francis Younghusband, only three out of five parts of Kashmir population were consumed by the famine of 1877. To this day this is known as "the Big Famine" (*bod draag*) in Kashmir. Dr. Arther Neve says that hundreds of Kashmiris were thrown into the Wular lake. One J.C. Murray Ensley was in Kashmir in those days. He wrote on the basis of a newspaper report of 13 August 1877 that in a village in the foot of Gulmarg Mountains, the bones of the inhabitants of an entire village had been found. Those people were hiding for the fear of being detected and caught by the soldiers of the Maharaja. Thousands of Muslims abandoned the valley during this famine and headed towards the Punjab for refuge (from famine). The conditions in Kashmir during the times of Ranbir Singh can be gleaned from the following excerpt of a freedom-loving Englishman namely Robert Thorp:

The Maharaja and his soldiers considered Kashmiris as their slaves. They perpetrated hair-raising oppression on them. The Maharaja and his functionaries legalised the summoning of the Kashmiri Muslims as servants, attendants, porters, footmen and peons. This law could not be challenged. Strangely bringing the Kashmiri Pandits within the ambit of forced labour was prohibited because they are Brahman gods (*devata*). It appears that the slavery system of Africa prevails in its worst form in Kashmir.¹

In this connection, Captain Knight, the correspondent of *The Times* London writes in his book *Where Three Empires Meet* as follows about the pitiable condition of the Kashmiris

Forced labour and Gilgit are two dreaded words in Kashmir. Destitute and helpless Kashmiris, with not a shred on their bodies and a sandal in their feet, are forcibly dragged out of their homes and dispatched to Gilgit like the beasts of burden. On those paths over the Rocky Mountains, they fall and die because of hunger and thirst. On snow and blizzard stricken mountain passes, they die in groups of hundreds. When an unfortunate Kashmiri is caught hold of for

¹ The Peerzadgan, Moulavis, Sofis and mendicants were also exempted

deployment on forced labour to Gilgit, his children and wife encircle him and give out hear-rending cries and sobs because they know they are passing on the bread winner of the family to certain death and would never ever see his face again. Such heart piercing scenes are told about those traversing the snow bound tracks in Siberia. But in Siberia, this pain and torture is inflicted on criminals and bad character. Those forced to traverse the fatal path to Gilgit are Kashmiri Muslims the innocent and harmless subjects of the Maharaja.

Ranbir Singh gave a new shape to the old scheme of colonization. He laid out Maharaj Ganj and Maharaj Bazar, and allotted shops to the Hindu traders and Khattris from outside the State in these localities.¹ There was double purpose in bringing these Khattris (shopkeepers). One was to tilt the population ratio of the Muslims of the valley, and the second was to put the lever of Kashmir business and economy in the hands of these non-Kashmiris so that they would suck the last drop of blood from the veins of the Kashmiris. Special residential localities for these people were made in Magharmal Bagh, Wazir Bagh, Raj Bagh and Munshi Bagh areas.² They were provided with large plots of land on throw away price for residential houses; they were also given

¹The author does not give the number of the Hindu businessmen who received the largesse. According to my information there were not more than a dozen of them. It has to be noted that most of them were not from Punjab but from Muzaffarabad and Mirpur areas which were part of J&K State. As such they were not outsiders nor were they non-state subjects. However they did not speak Kashmiri. (tr)

²These new habitats were developed during the Dogra period. Of course the Punjabi speaking people chose these settlements for their residence. The process of new settlements coming up is a continued one. Today we have large and well planned settlements in and around Jammu city mostly inhabited by the Kashmiri Muslims. Batindi, Narwal, Janipore, Top, Gujjar Nagar, Siddhra etc. are Muslim majority settlements, and curiously most of the terrorists in Jammu have been captured from these localities. Jammu people do not seriously take it an attempt of changing the demographic complexion of the town although reportedly nearly 27,000 homesteads of Kashmiri Muslims have come up in these localities. Many Muslim MLAs, Ministers and bureaucrats from Kashmir have built palaces in these colonies.

permission to fell the tree from the jungles to obtain timber for construction of their houses.

This was the period for the rise to its heights of glory for the biggest local colonizing agency namely the tribe of Dhars. They devised all possible methods to further weaken the condition of the Kashmiris. As such an idiom in Kashmiri language gained popularity viz. *Dhar abad teb Kashir barbad* meaning when the Dhars are prosperous, Kashmir is desolate.¹

At this point of time, the first labour uprising in contemporary times took place in Zaldagar. The helpless shawl weavers were trampled under the hoofs of cavalry horses under the instructions of the Director (*daroga*) of Shawl Making department (Dag Shawl), Rajkak Dhar. Many victims fell down from Hajji Rather bund and were drowned in the Jhelum. A Kashmiri satirist composed this Farsi verse to satirise the rule of "righteousness" of the Dogra rulers.

Bud wird-e zaban-e ahl-e kharaj

Dharon ka raj mulk ka taraj

(The tax payers chanted as this: {the rule of Dhars (means) the destruction of the country})

At this juncture, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj suggested to the Maharaja that this country should become Aryavarata. *Shuddhi* (purification) and *Sangbathan* (solidarity) should be promoted and it should be purified. The Yavanas (Muslims) should be kept away from the state machinery.

¹In history, we come across houses that have wielded power and influence and have played a role in making the history of the people among whom they lived. The Dhars of Safakadal, Srinagar were one such family. The rise of these families is to be understood in the background of political, social and economic conditions prevailing at the moment. Today we have the third generation of Sheikh Abdullah's house wielding supreme power and influence in Kashmir. Cliché like the one stated here are common to many situations and personalities.

It is known to all that Maharaja Pratap Singh was not prepared to see the face of any Muslim from early morning till noon, the time scheduled for offering prayers. And if by chance his eyes caught the sight of a Musulman during these hours, he considered it an ill omen and paid for its compensations.¹ During his times, there was a massive influx of non-Kashmiri Hindus into Kashmir. The words of Swami Dayanand were ringing in the ears of the Maharaja. That was the reasons why he encouraged a great inflow of the non-local Hindus and appointed them on high posts. They were provided with a number of incentives for taking up residence in Kashmir.² This influx of non local Hindus ultimately became a campaign. Through better experience and expertise, these non-local Hindus established their sway over the economic life of the State. They dominated the administrative structure, acquired *jagirs* and monopolized trade and commerce.³ Kashmiri Musulman did not figure anywhere. He was not a competitor at all and was virtually the slave of non-local compatriots. His blood and sweat provided greenery to the fields belonging to his masters and enlivened their parlours with merriment.

However, when Kashmiri Pandits and Jammu Hindus saw that outsiders had begun to establish their sway, they felt their interests were threatened. Around 1922, the Kashmiri Pandits and Jammu Hindus jointly raised the voice of disallowing the

¹During the reign of Sultans, when Shamsu'd-Din Araki launched his mission of conversion, he physically punished a Hindu petty official for riding a horse in his presence and not dismounting on seeing him.(tr)

²Autocrats always behave like that. During the days of Shahmiri Sultans of Kashmir, men coming from Iran and Turkestan were shown special favours and given high administrative positions in Kashmir. They were given *jagirs* which their descendants hold even today. The Mughals of India did the same on a very large scale so much so that there appeared rivalry between the Iranian and Turanian émigrés at the Mughal Court.

³This precisely applies to the Baihaqi Sayyids of Kashmir also. Sayyind Mahmud Baihaqi, a non-Kashmiri even rose to be the Sultan of Kashmir for some time.

non-locals to purchase land in Kashmir, and to keep them out of government jobs.¹

In those days, Raja Hari Singh was busy hatching conspiracies against his aged uncle, Maharaja Pratap Singh. Because of the intrigues of his late father and his own manipulations, he had the apprehension that the dying Maharaja (Pratap Singh) might decline to pass on the crown to him. He (Hari Singh) also joined issue with the Pandits and Jammu Hindus. At the end of the day, the State Subject law came into being. Under this law, non-local persons were not allowed to purchase landed property in Kashmir. At that point of time, eighty five percent of the *jagirs* in Kashmir rested with the Jammu and the Pandit landlords and *chakdars*.² The strange thing is that while today the Muslims are no more in need of auctioning their properties, Karan Singh, the illustrious son of Hari Singh, vociferously demands abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution although this was done in accordance with the spirit of the State Subject law. It is a matter of regret that some among Pandit fraternity, who, at one point of time, had raised their voice in support of this law, have no qualms of conscience in joining the camp of Karan Singh and non-local merchant class demanding the abrogation of Article 370. This is done with the sole objective of taking away the landed properties in Kashmir from the

¹This practice has not only been continued but strongly supported and reinforced with constitutional provisions by the Government of Sheikh Abdullah. Article 370 of Indian Constitution and special Status for Kashmir are the products of this practice.

²Abolishing of *jagirdari* and *chakdari* system was the corner stone of Naya Kashmir programme. Once that was accomplished without any compensation to the owners of the land (something unique to Kashmir), the much talked about *Naya Kashmir* was consigned to dustbin and never taken back for implementation. The Muslim *chakdars* and *jagirdars* of Kashmir quickly distributed their *jagirs* among their true or fake descendants and the supportive revenue officials made entries in revenue records and thus no Kashmiri Muslim lost any piece of his land. Although inequitable, abolishing of *jagirdari* system was a great progressive step, yet its uniform application in Kashmir Valley was unduly undermined.

hands of Kashmiri Musulman and passing them into the hands of Hindu capitalists, who would come to Kashmir in huge numbers and thus reduce the Kashmiri Muslims to a minority.¹

Conspiracies against Kashmir Freedom Movement²

Maharaja Hari Singh ascended the throne after the death of Pratap Singh. With that, the sentiment of reducing the Muslims majority to a minority was rekindled. The following clippings from the Hindu newspapers of the day will show what conspiracies were being hatched.

"We shall also demonstrate something unique. The scent of what we propose to do will spread from Kabul to Calcutta and from Kashmir to Cape Camorine. This will be the Hindu Sangathan (Solidarity). This will bring the Hindu State into being. There will be complete *shuddhi* (purification) and the borders of Afghanistan will be conquered. All these miracles will appear very soon". *Milap*, Lahore 15 May 1925.

"When the time will draw near to obtain self-rule (*swarajya*) through the power of Hindu solidarity (*sangathan*), at that time the Hindu Mahasabha will announce its decisions as to what will be the duties and rights of the Muslims and the Christians in the new state and what will be the condition for their *shuddhi* (purification). *Milap*, Lahore 25 May 1925.

This type of mentality had become so pervasive that Rajas and Maharajas, instead of caring for their subjects, had become victims of shocking prejudice. In this context, the

¹No one has heard Karan Singh demanding abrogation of Article 370. But the fact of the matter is that there are sections of people in India and in the State who argue that when a J&K subject has the right to purchase land and other immoveable property anywhere in India, why are citizens of India not allowed to buy land and property in J&K State? This one-way traffic is not going to integrate the people of the State into the Indian Union. Once B.K. Nehru, the Governor of J&K said jokingly that he being of Kashmiri origin could not buy an inch of land in his ancestral state, while his orderly, a Kashmiri subject, could buy land anywhere in India. How can, in the era of globalization, this policy of segregation continue indefinitely?

²The political movement in Kashmir under the Sheikh and its NC is not to be understood through the parameters of freedom movement in India under the Congress. In Kashmir it was a political movement (uprising against the autocratic rule of Dogras of Hindu faith. (*Translator's Comment*)

famous Kashmir expert and friend of Kashmir, Sir Walter Lawrence has recounted an anecdote. He writes: The brother of the Maharaja of Jodhpur hated the Muslims. However, I came to know about the depth of this hatred only when I was preparing to return home from India. The Viceroy hosted a farewell dinner in my honor. Sri Pratap Singh was among the guests. He said that the purpose of his life was to destroy the Musulmans of India.¹

In Kashmir, the Maharaja had raised the slogan of justice. But in spite of that he ran an oppressive and prejudiced government so much so that a state-level movement emerged in 1931, which ultimately took the shape of a freedom movement in the State. It is worth mentioning that on July 3, 1931, the peaceful demonstrators at the main gate of the Central jail in Srinagar were fired at. They had raised the slogan of "Long Live Justice" But Maharajas "Justice" was only false. Those wretched people got justice through the barrel of the gun.²

Although the movement in 1931 was one against injustice and oppression, yet the Maharaja, his protégés and the Hindus press projected it a dangerous conspiracy. The *Milap* and *Pratap* gave it the name of "Pan-Islamism", "setting up an Islamic state" and at times "bringing in of 'Bolshevik revolution'". In this way, non-Muslims of the sub-continent and the British imperialism both were induced to stand up jointly against the rightful and genuine movement.³ The President of Hindu Sabha, Dr. Munje happened to be in

¹For detailed information about the role of the colonialists in fomenting Hindu-Muslim conflict in India see *Imperialist Maneuvers in Kashmir 1846-1946* by N.N. Raina, Link Publications, Delhi.

²These demonstrators actually tried to break the gates of the jail and attacked the guards who opened fire. The immediate fall out of the firing was the widespread loot and arson of Hindu shops and business establishments in Maharaj Ganj, Zaina Kadal. Some Hindu houses in Vichar Nag were also attacked by the rowdy crowds of Muslim youth.

³Researches by historians have established beyond doubt the role of the British Agent and his cronies in fomenting the crisis in Kashmir. Divide and rule is their patent principle of diplomacy.

London at the time. There he issued a statement saying that it was a conspiracy of the Muslims against a Hindu state, and the British government should not tolerate the high handedness of the Muslims in this border state. Another towering Hindu leader, Dr. Khare came to Muzaffarabad and told the audience in a Hindu meeting that it was their religious duty to protect the Hindu Raj of Kashmir. He added that they would not rest until the uprising was crushed. Mr. Khushal Chand, the editor of *Milap* wrote in his own handwritings as this:

"The readying of the Muslims of the State of Jammu and Kashmir for a revolt is the outcome of a conspiracy. This conspiracy has to be uprooted. The seeds sown on Kashmir at this point of time need to be destroyed". (*Milap* 17 July 1931, p.3)

Again, the following provocative statements:

Kashmir is in trouble, the slaves have staged an uprising (*Milap*, Nov 1931 p.5) If the Muslims prevail in Kashmir and the Kashmiri Hindus were harmed, then the condition of 38 crores of Hindus in Hindustan will be in peril. Preparations of destroying us are underway in Kashmir. The Hindus of the Punjab should wake up otherwise their condition will be the same as that of the (Hindus of) Kashmir. (*Milap* 31 Oct 1931, p.14).

If the Hindus of India want to save this State, they should say good bye to ease and comfort and engage their selves in a struggle. This is the time to wake up, be alert and save the Hindu state that has fallen in the clutches of the devils. (*Milap* 14 Nov).

Not only that, one newspaper incited the flames of enmity and anarchy against Kashmiri Muslims to the extent that it wrote, "On all the four sides of Kashmir, there are Muslims states. If the Islamic flag flutters over Kashmir, it will be very dangerous for the British government". The condition became so serious that the prime Minister had to announce in the House of Commons that no proof has been found of the hand of the Bolsheviks in the Kashmir turmoil. (House of Commons Proceedings 22 Feb, 1932).

The propaganda laid emphasis on this: The Kashmiri Muslims, who according to the *Milap* had more rights, should, for redemption (of their sins) announce that they do not demand any kind of rights and are happy with the conditions in which they are at the moment (14 August 1931). They are running the Pan-Islamic movement. This last mentioned allegation was made mostly in London. A well-wisher of the Kashmiris, Albion Bannerjee, who had resigned in 1929 from State service on account of differences with the Maharaja, and who had exposed the misdeeds of the Kashmir Durbar to the whole world, had to issue the following statement:

More than one person in India and England invited my attention to the statement that the turmoil in Kashmir is the result of Pan-Islamism. I had until recent days remained the foreign and political minister in the service of Sri Hari Singh and would not like to join a debate in regard to Kashmir affairs. But in the on going situation, it would be only proper that keeping the public good in mind, I should put forth my opinion, which is based on my personal knowledge. I think Pan-Islamic movement is a hoax contrived by mischievous persons. The fact of the matter is that the Kashmiri masses are the most innocent and law-abiding people in the whole of India. For centuries they have born privations under the influence of the Pandits of Kashmir.

This poisonous propaganda against Kashmiri Muslims was not an isolated event. Kashmir Durbar was encouraging it. The Maharaja had called Raja Hari Krishen Kaul from Lahore to suppress the movement in Kashmir. After assuming the charge of the Prime Minister of the State, he maintained regular contacts with the Hindu leaders and newspapers in Lahore. He had posted his personal assistant Jeevanlal Matto in Lahore. He was the person doing wire pulling and painting the people's movement as a communal uprising thereby bringing a bad name to Kashmiri Muslims. A close relative of the Maharaja and a minister in the cabinet namely Thakur Kartar Singh made this baseless statement before the Dalal

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Commission: "The purpose of the Kashmir movement¹ is to establish Islamic government in Northern India".

The tirade of Pan-Islamism and Islamic State was not meant only to paint Kashmir movement in wrong colour. It also meant to create an atmosphere conducive for Hindu public opinion in regard to the scheme he had put forth and which had evoked palpable response in the Kashmir Council of Ministers. Lala Hardayal was a staunch Hindu communalist and supporter of Hindu Mahasabha. His scheme envisaged transforming Muslims of the State of Kashmir and the NWFP into a minority and thus making the borders (wall) of Aryavarta impregnable. In this context, Gokal Chand Narang, a leading advocate of Lahore wrote to the Maharaja towards the end of 1931 that as long as he did not pay heed to their advice, he could not enjoy a peaceful sleep. He advised the Maharaja that he should throw open Kashmir borders on the Hindus from the Punjab. Punjab was a broad region that encompassed a large population. If a few lakhs of Hindus from the Punjab moved into Kashmir and desired to settle down there, it would certainly imbalance the ratio of the population. The only condition was that these Hindus should be provided adequate facilities and privileges for change of place. The secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha Physical Culture and Volunteer Department, Padam Raj Jain paid a visit to Srinagar where he met with Maharaja and Raja Hari Koul. Another top leader of Hindu Mahasabha, namely Bhai Parmanand emphasized the necessity of correcting the situation in Kashmir.

Deep anguish and despair continued to be expressed on the conditions of the Muslims in Kashmir. In a memorandum presented by Sanatan Dharm Young Mens Association (Yuvak Sabha) leaders in Srinagar to the Glancy Commission, the use of the term "Kashmiri Hindu" was insisted upon

¹It was a movement launched by the Muslim Conference. As such it did not have "national" but only sectarian contours. If it were not that, Sheikh Abdullah had no reason to part ways and establish National Conference.

instead of 'Kashmiri Pandit'. The memorandum was printed at Bharat Printing Press Lahore and the Hindu Mahasabha activists had a special role in its drafting. In its opening part, a claim contrary to the facts was stated as this: "A majority of Kashmiri Hindus has been converted to Islamic faith at the point of gun. A large number of them were forced to abandon their homes and hearths and take shelter in Hindustan."

It is clear that they were dreaming of reversing the Muslims majority in Kashmir. More surprisingly, the story of faithlessness to the Kashmir cause was recounted with gusto and with the support of historical evidence in the process. This also shows to what length they were ready to go against their comparators, and to denigrate and humiliate them.

In the second decade of the last century, they (Kashmiri Hindus) changed the government of the land (Kashmir). This achievement was made under the leadership of Birbal Dhar and Mirza (Kak?) Dhar. By inviting the Sikhs to Kashmir, they took care of their own and their country's deliverance.¹ During the rule of the Sikh Governors and first two Dogra rulers, they (Dhars/Kashmiri Hindus) were not only the king makers but also filled most important administrative posts. During the rule of Maharaja Gulab Singh and Ranbir Singh, the Kashmiri Hindus occupied the posts of Governor, Accountant General and Development Minister in both of the provinces.

These perfidies were perpetrated against the Muslims. In order to deprive them of their just rights; gimmicks like Roti Agitation were floated.² At the same time, Kashmiri Muslims were gradually inching towards secular politics after the clouds of emotions began to disappear. Kashmiri Muslims are traditionally tolerant. Owing to the teachings of saints like Shaykh Nurud-Din, they do not believe in Hindu-Muslim

¹It reminds one of a delegation of Kashmiri Sunni Muslims led by Maulana Sarfi to the court of Akbar in A.D. 1588 requesting the Emperor to send Mughal troops to defeat the Shia ruler of Kashmir (Yusuf Shah Chak), and of Kaji Chak visiting Humayun in Agra and requesting for Mughal troops to recapture Kashmir for him.

²For Roti Agitation see *Agitation for Roti*, Digital Preservation Foundation

discrimination. In the first session of the Muslims Conference in 1932, the elected President and the founder-leader of freedom movement, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah said, "The rights that we demand for the Muslims are also the rights that we demand for our non-Muslim compatriots". (Presidential address of the session held at Pathar Masjid, Srinagar).

As Kashmir Freedom Movement matured, it developed national and secular susceptibility. Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah held meetings with the Pandit leaders of Kashmir and also invited them to speak from his platform. During the riots, Sheikh Sahib, risking his life, managed the cremation of a Pandit girl amidst doubts and suspicious galore. At last with the efforts of Sheikh Sahib, the largest popular organization in Kashmir, namely National Conference came to be raised on secular foundations. For this step, Sheikh Sahib became a target of hostility from communalists. These included communalists from communities, the Hindus and the Muslims. The Muslim communalists taunted and upbraided him but he remained steadfast to his conviction. He said that their struggle was not on the basis of prejudice and religion but on the basis of class and just principles. He said that the oppressors and the oppressed were among the Muslims as well as among the Hindus. As such, there could be no discrimination of mosque and temple. He said that they hated oppression and not the oppressor, the disease not the diseased. On the one hand Sheikh Sahib was taking this bold and humane step but on the other hand, his Pandit comrades were rendered helpless by their mentality expressing apprehensions about his secular movement. As the movement gained strength, they drew the inference that the Hindu kingship would be harmed. Thus Bazaz, Kilam and Kashyapa Bandhu, all resigned from National Conference.¹ However the leadership of the organization remained

¹This was not the cause for their resignation. The real reason was Sheikh's assertion to Kashyapa Bandhu that "Islam is the Sun and all other religions are stars". See Kashyapa Bandhu's letters translated into English by this writer and published by Kashmir Sentinel.

steadfast in its mission and began developing contacts with the largest secular organization of the country namely Indian National Congress. Jawaharlal Nehru visited Kashmir. Even he was not spared by the Hindu communalists. Demonstrations against him were staged. Jawaharlal Nehru had to go to the central place of the Pandits in Sheetalnath and in his address to the Pandits he called a spade a spade. He told them to give up treating the Muslims with hatred and scorn on the basis of unsociability. He advised them to join hands with the Muslims and work for a just and democratic system in the State.¹

But despite this, communalism continued with its full fury. Kashmiri Pandits did not only withdraw from the mainstream of the freedom movement but also took leading role in opposing it. In order to show down the secular movement of Kashmir, they did not even hesitate to establish unholy alliance with the Muslim communalists.

Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad visited Kashmir in 1944. Indian communalists were not happy at it. They felt that this healthy current would give a set back to their diseased communal plan. Prior to it, a Hindu-Sikh youth group had been established in Jammu led by Kaviraj Vishnu. According to the *Ranbir* published from Jammu, in the Muzaffarabad session, the following resolution was adopted: "Kashmir belongs to Hindu Maharaja and the Muslims do not have a right to rule". However Vir Savarkar came to the State

¹It is important to record here that in the speech under reference, Nehru had threatened that if the Pandits did not fall in line with National Conference and the leadership of Sheikh Abdullah, they would be wiped out. History is a cruel judge. The same person who the Pandits were advised to follow was dismissed as premier and arrested and lodged in jails for 12 long years by same Pandit Nehru. Furthermore Sheikh's insistence for special status of J&K in Indian Constitution including Article 370 amply reflected his communal proclivities. He wanted to safeguard the interests of Kashmir Muslims in Hindu dominated India. What about Hindu minority in Muslim dominated Kashmir? No constitutional safeguard was even thought of leave aside giving it a practical shape. The Pandits were justified in taking an appropriate decision in their political preservation.

to infuse new spirit into communal groups in the State. He joined his voice with that of the Muslim League leadership and said that secular politics in Kashmir was only to dupe the Hindus of the State. Going a step further, he said it (secularism) would become a source of danger to the collective interests of the Hindus.

In 1946, the President of Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah raised the revolutionary slogan of "Quit Kashmir".¹ Jawaharlal Nehru supported it² but entire non-Muslim press of India, the Hindu Mahasabha and other communal elements joined voices to denounce the movement as the movement of the goons. They called Sheikh Abdullah a rebel and demanded action against him. Jawaharlal Nehru came up to Kohala to express his sympathy with Kashmiri people who had been made the target of bullets. He was surprised to find that those who blocked his road and yelled "go back" included the Mahasabha activists from Jammu and his blood relations among the Kashmiri Pandits.³

Plan of genocide of Kashmiris

Now plans were drawn for the partition of the country.⁴ Muslim and Hindu communalists in India were preparing to

¹Historians and research scholars have unearthed a letter written by Sheikh Abdullah to Maharaja Hari Singh in 1945-46, apologizing for agitation against the regime and pledging his loyalty to it.

²Why did not Nehru support, patronize or initiate a similar movement in any other Princely State out of nearly 560 of them in the rest of India?

³For an insight into the story of detention of Nehru at Kohala in 1946, see relevant portions and letters exchanged between the Maharaja and authorities in New Delhi in the biography of Sardar Patel, *The Sardar* by V.P. Menon. Furthermore, it is Sheikh Abdullah who writing about Nehru in his autobiography *Atash-e-Chinar* says, "After all I had blood relations with him."

⁴Partition of India along two nation's theory was the long standing demand of Muslim League and the plan for the partition was drawn by the British rulers. Jinnah had declared "Direct Action" in Bengal, which meant "playing with the blood of human beings".

play with the blood of human beings. On the advice of his Delhi-based communal friends, the Maharaja appointed an old time and seasoned Arya Samajist namely Mehar Chand Mahajan as the Prime Minister of the State. Another Hindu demagogue named Ram Batra represented him. Both were introspecting how to transform the Kashmiri Muslim majority into a minority. In independent India, they found new and powerful patrons in the corridors of power in New Delhi. The murderers of Mahatma Gandhi and the old time rival of Jawaharlal Nehru¹ joined hands and began to think of implementing the Hardayal Plan in Kashmir.

In order to facilitate their work, their Pakistani communal colleagues,² too, were pre-occupied with machinations. Although the whole of Kashmir was a Muslim majority area yet they thought it a thorn in their side. It was only the Muslim majority of Kashmir that could be singled out as one in the subcontinent rejecting their two nations theory. Not only that, the Kashmiri (Muslims) had boldly stood against it. They wanted to take revenge from them. Without taking its consequences into consideration, they launched an attack on Kashmir and without discriminating people on the basis of religion and community, subjected them to loot and arson.³ Nationalist and patriotic Muslims like Master Abdul Aziz and Maqbool Sherwani stood up to them. By making the supreme

¹Subtle allusion in "old time rival of Nehru" is to Sardar Patel with whom the Maharaja had been in correspondence for a long time. The author is misinformed on relations between the Sardar and Nehru. In the Central Committee of Congress High Command presided over by Gandhi, vote was taken on the choice of the Prime Minister of India. Two candidates, Nehru and Patel were in the fray. Patel got 9 out of 10 votes. After the declaration of the result of voting, Patel withdrew his election in favour of Nehru.

²Were there any non-communal leaders in the newly formed state of Pakistan? Pakistan was created by the Indian Muslims on the basis of two-nations theory, and the nation that lived in the new state was certainly the Muslim nation which had refused to live with non-Muslims? Where was space for non-communal Muslims?

³The story of persecution of Hindus and Sikhs during the tribal attack falsifies this claim.

sacrifice of their lives, they brought honour to their leader and the movement. The backbone of two-nation theory was broken in Kashmir.¹ The whole world saw that Kashmiri Muslims refused to be ensnared by Pakistani rulers who have been making loud promises. They decided to bring about their accession with democratic India on the basis of the principles of secularism. Many difficulties had to be faced but the demon of Muslim communalism was banished from Kashmir.² It took shelter on the other side of the border.

Communalism is a multi-headed hydra. If you sever its one head, another head rises in its place. While Muslim communalism was banished, Hindu communalism re-emerged after some time. Now it has the monopoly of keeping the flame of the demonic fire of Hindu communalism burning. Without a rival, the Hindu communalists began ruling the roost, and made preparations for transforming Kashmiri majority into a minority.

In March 1947, the Maharajas of Patiala and Kapurthala came to Jammu on the invitation of Hari Singh. For several days they were his guests; enjoying feasts and dinners. Simultaneously, the secret plan of massacre and transforming the Muslim majority into a minority was finalized.³ Soon after this event, the Dogra army embarked on loot and killing in Poonch and Kotli areas. Hari Singh emerged in his true colours and made an open declaration of war against his own Muslim subjects.⁴ On the night of 26th October 26, 1947, he

¹Did history prove it right?

²Why then Article 370?

³The author makes no mention of Muslim League leaders of Lahore making a flurry of secret visits to Srinagar at this point of time and engaging local Muslim Conference leaders (Mohiud-Din Qara and others) in closed door meetings.

⁴It has already been said that the demobilized soldiers of World War II from Sudnoti, Bag, Mirpur and Muzaffarabad had staged an armed insurgency in those parts of the J&K State and Maharaja's forces had to meet this internal threat. There was no unilateral action from the side of the State administration at that time.

fled to Jammu carrying with him baggage of pearls and diamonds.¹ At every place throughout the route to Jammu he hinted to finish the Muslims. Eye witnesses to that episode are still living.² After reaching Chineni, Rani Tara Devi eschewed all measures of caution. She took an idol in her lap. Sitting in an open car, she left her hair loose as if she was in a state of mourning. She talked with the people en-route and told them about the desecration of the idol and thus instigated them for revenge. The result was that she left behind her entourage a trail of death and destruction. Chaos and anarchy ensued all around. Riots and disturbances that consumed human beings engulfed entire Jammu region.³

The RSS activists and volunteers from East Punjab had already arrived in Jammu and begun mass murder. Groups after groups of armed men arrived and had fanned out from Kathua to Riasi and Ramban. After their arrival in Jammu, the royal couple took the command of this genocide into their own hands. Tara Devi was exceptionally active in this context. The troops of the Maharaja also got a hint. They seized arms from the arsenal and fanned out on all sides as messengers of death.⁴ In the first week of November 1947,

¹The fleeing of Hari Singh in 1947 reminds one of identical running away of Farooq Abdullah in January 1990 to London. Of course unlike Hari Singh, he did not carry with him bagfuls of jewels because he had already a hefty bank balance in the UK banks.

²Same eye witnesses have said that the family of Sheikh Abdullah including Begum Akbar Jahan were moved to Indore and lodged in an undisclosed place when news came that Baramulla had fallen to the invading hordes.

³The author carefully avoids describing the situation in the districts of Muzaffrabad and Baramulla when the town fell to the tribal hordes.

⁴The facts about local Muslims of Baramulla and Muzaffrabad districts as pioneers of the invading tribesmen to Hindu and Sikh habitats, identifying their prominent personalities to them, guiding them along safe routes for their movement towards Srinagar, getting the Hindus and Sikhs massacred have been totally suppressed under the lies and canards of so-called Hindu-Muslim amity. Once the horrendous stories of genocide, rape and arson perpetrated by the locals in these two districts when these fell to the ...

the Muslims were taken out of their homes under the pretext of carrying them to Pakistan. On their way to Samba they were done to death by machine gun fire. That event of contemporary history is a heart-rending and soul stirring event. From Poonch up to Samba, the entire border was cleared of the Muslims who were driven to the other side of the border. The joint command of the Maharaja, Mahajan, Batra and the leadership of RSS together and in tandem executed this plan with full vigour. RSS and its ally Mehar Chand Mahajan were doing all this under a considered plan. All traces of Muslims in the Muslim majority State of Kapurthala were eradicated. In Bharatpur and Alwar their selective killing was engineered. On 21 October 1947, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah exposed this conspiracy in a press conference in New Delhi and raised his voice of protest on the killing of the Muslim in the Poonch and other places.

In those days, Mahatma Gandhi was trying to control the flames of communal violence through his blood, sweat and tears. In the high buildings in Delhi real power rested in the hands of those who neither sympathized with the fire brigades of Gandhian philosophy nor with Nehru's secularism. They wanted the State of Jammu and Kashmir to remain with India as a Hindu majority State.

Not only in Jammu, the Muslims were massacred in Reasi, Kishtwar, Bhaderwah, Akhnoor, Kathua and other places too. Their daughters and daughters-in-law were kidnapped in thousands. At this point of time more than 200,000 of Muslims were pushed to the other side of the border never to return. Mehar Chand Mahajan told the people of Jammu to demand equal share in the State Council of Ministers. When the delegation told him that their population was lesser than that of the Muslims in the State, Mahajan said that they should not

... invaders, are told, the true history of tribal invasion of Kashmir in 1947 will come to light. For a brief insight see my "Of Communal Harmony and Political Interests" published in *New Hope*, Srinagar, April 2002, p.37.

worry then and the matter had been taken care of assuring them that everything would be set right.

The fact of the matter is that owing to underhand policies of Mahajan, the Muslim majority province of Jammu had succeeded in turning into a Hindu majority province. When Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah brought pressure on Delhi for stopping the carnage of the Muslims in Jammu, the Maharaja sent his activists to villages spreading the news that the Maharaja Bahadur had directed that the killings should stop. With this the swords would go back to the scabbards and knives into their sheaths. The result of this loot and killing was that the graph of the Muslim population distribution in Jammu changed drastically. According to the census report of 1941, the population of the Muslims in those areas that remained with the Indian Union was 670,000. In 1961 the census figure showed this population only 598492 although during the period in view, population of the same state increased by over 17 per cent.

After the trap of 1953

In the aftermath of 1953, one more attempt of changing Kashmir into a Muslim minority state was made. Now the command of this mission was given in the hands of the great grand son of Birbal Dhar and Rajakak Dhar, namely D. P. Dhar. At that time D.P was the Home Minister in the ministry of Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq.¹ He had decided to clear the whole of the border area of Muslim population. This was despite the fact that Muhammad Din, a resident of the border and the first person to bring information about the intruders to the government was awarded *Padma Shree*. As such the patriotic sentiment of the Muslims of the State was recognized. Civil administration had been fully suspended in Poonch at that time and the Deputy Commissioner was called

⁶⁹The story of split in Bakhshi-led NC and the creation of DNC has already been told by Reshi Dev. See the text.

back. The Congress MP from Poonch, Ghulam Muhammad Mir and the MLA and the MLC were stopped from visiting that place (Poonch). D.P. kept them in his own house with all facilities and comforts. It was a clever way of detaining them away from Poonch. On D.P.'s behest, the Sarva Sanghchalak of RSS, Guru Golwalkar came to Jammu. The two, Guru Golwalkar and D.P. Dhar began their secret parleys aiming at forcing entire Muslim population to vacate the area. The army had become completely isolated because of the absence of civil administration and political advice, a situation of confusion prevailed in entire Poonch district. D.P. visited Poonch in a bid to bring his mission to completion. But many agencies in the country including non-Muslims like Balraj Puri, a Jammu-based political activist, raised a hue and cry in the state. Balraj Puri published an article on this theme in a Delhi-based newspaper. The article bore the title "Two Cheers for the Security Forces. He wrote that the achievement of the armed forces in beating back the aggressors is to be eulogized and given two cheers. The third cheer will be given only when those state subjects who have been pushed back from the border only because they are Muslims are brought back. This information was brought to Sadiq Sahib and its reverberations were heard in national and international circles. D.P. Dhar was still in Poonch when Sadiq Sahib relieved him of home portfolio. D.P. Dhar was taken aback by this development and returned to Srinagar in despondency. When this conspiracy was unearthed, seventy thousand Muslims returned from across the border to their homes and hearths. In this way one more conspiratorial attempt met with failure.

It may be recollected that prior to it, D.P. Dhar had said it publicly that anybody coming back after crossing the border would face the bullet. But later on Jai Prakash Narayan sent his representatives, Ahmad Fatimi and Miss Thakur to Kashmir. Apart from them, some enlightened friends in

Jammu also protested against the step. On their behest, Lal Bahadur Shastri gave the permission of bringing seventy thousand Muslim State subjects back to their State.¹ At that point of time, *Ranbir*, the old enemy of Kashmiri Muslims brought out this mischievous and insinuating suggestion that if Kashmir was to be secured then Muslims should be extirpated from that place. *Ranbir* wrote that there were 20 to 25 lakh Muslims in Kashmir. It would not be a big thing to scatter them in a big country like Hindustan and settle them separately in the Indian states. Their voice will be drowned in the new places and also their individuality. At the same time Hindus of these areas should be brought and settled in Kashmir. A fully Hindu-Kashmir will be a boon for the whole of Bharat. The *Milap* supported his argument with the statement that after the World War II, Russia had to face the opposition from the local population in Armenia. In order to change the population ratio in the province, Russians scattered a major chunk of its population throughout the Soviet Union. People from other states were settled in Armenia. Thus Russians felt satisfied with their scheme. The same prescription should be proposed for India also that Kashmir is denuded of Kashmiris.

Communalists in the State and the country made a mountain of a very insignificant incident of one Pandit girl Parmeshwari converting to Parveen Akhtar in 1967. The voices of *shuddhi* (purification) and *Sangbathan* (solidarity) were raised once again. A severed trunk of a cow was thrown on the roadside in Jammu so that Hindus would get infuriated. Jana Sangh played up baseless rumour that dead bodies of a hundred Kashmiri Pandits were lying in Sheetal Nath,

¹No chief minister of J&K showed such largeness of heart towards 300000 Kashmiri Pandits hounded out of the valley in 1990 as was practically shown by Lal Bahadur Shastri to seventy thousand Muslims. Moreover, lakhs of Hindus and Sikhs driven out of towns and villages of PoK are not even recognised as State Subject by J&K Government leave alone rehabilitating them.

This is actual - has been done to 500s before 1990

Srinagar, awaiting cremation. Old voices of extirpating the Muslims and taking revenge from them were heard once again. Loot and arson ensued and the Jana Sangh gangster demanded blood for blood. The sensitive situation was exacerbated by the provocative speeches of Balraj Madhok. He is a big villain of the massacre and riots of 1947 in Jammu. That was the reason why the government of Sheikh Abdullah issued the orders of his expulsion.¹ He continued to speak about anti-nationalism of Muslims of the State.² He repeatedly demanded that the Kashmiri Muslims of pro-Pak Muslim mentality should be pushed across the borders and Kashmir made a Hindu majority State. He argued that only in that situation this northern fort of India could be made secure. In 1967, he once again added fuel to the flames of hatred in Jammu and openly demanded the banishment of the Muslims. He said that Muslims looked to Arabia for their sacred places and go to that country for performing Hajj. As such they can never be loyal to India. Kashmir is the shrine of the Hindus and the Muslims have desecrated it with their presence. These people should forcibly be sent across the border and Hindus should be brought in and settled there. He said that this evil should be nipped in the bud for ever. However the saner elements in the State and the country came forward and deflected the thrust of this storm.

In the light of this background, it becomes the duty of every secular and patriotic Kashmiri and Indian to keep an eye on all those conspiracies, which these elements revive

¹Madhok, once Professor of History and a staunch RSS activist and later on a Jana Sangh activist has been branded as Hindu communalist. He is a remarkable figure who has been exposing Muslim communalism. He has said in several speeches that after hearing horrendous stories of massacre of Hindus and Sikhs in Muzaffarabad and Baramulla districts by the invader and their local sympathizers, he had organized RSS cadres in Srinagar to resist violence against them in case Srinagar fell to the invaders. For the role of local actors in the attack of tribesmen on Kashmir in 1947, see my article in *New Hope*, p.183 *Supra*.

²The rise of 1990 armed insurgency in Kashmir has vindicated Madhok.

time and again to bring their old plans to completion. One more gimmick is that a demand has been made that those refugees who ran away from West Pakistan in 1947 and came to the State be given the civil rights.¹

As far as constitutional and legal aspects of the case are concerned, these people were not state subjects before the partition. Under the State constitution and Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, they can never be accepted as the citizens of the State.² It is true that on humanitarian grounds, the State government had allowed them to stay in the State temporarily. The understanding with the Central government was that they were the responsibility of the Central government and as soon as conditions returned to normal, they would be settled somewhere outside the jurisdiction of the State.³ But the Central government has been avoiding

¹National Conference leadership has stubbornly held on to the pretext that the refugees who came to J&K in the wake of the partition of 1947 are Indian citizens and have no right to stay on in the State. The fact is that nearly seven hundred thousand Sikhs and Hindus of present PoK (Azad Kashmir) were forced to leave their homes and hearths and migrate to those regions of the State that fell within Indian Union after State's accession. Most of them have even produced satisfactory evidence of their state subject-hood. But ever since the partition of the country they have remained unrecognized citizens of the State. Furthermore how can one ascertain that the Muslims for whom the State government wants re-entry into J&K through the instrument of the Resettlement Bill are actually Kashmiri state subjects? What mechanism of verification is there?

²If this argument is accepted then a serious question arises. Those Kashmiri youth who clandestinely sneaked into PoK in the aftermath of the rise of insurgency in 1990, are not to be accepted back as Indian citizens. They have forfeited their right to be the citizens of India. Why does the J&K Government seek their return and rehabilitation?

³It should be reminded that several thousand Hindus and Sikhs of Muzaffarabad, Domel, Chakothi, Chinari and Uri who fled to the valley before advancing tribesmen sought refuge in Srinagar. No sooner did the Sheikh assume power than he bundled these refugees to Jammu. Scores of tongas were requisitioned to carry them to Jammu. He plainly said that he would not allow them to stay in Kashmir Valley. Later on he alleged that criminals in Jammu had massacred Muslim tongawalas who took Muzaffarabad Sikh and Hindu refugees from Srinagar to Jammu in October/November 1990. O. Agamnigam Digital Preservation Foundation

fulfilling its responsibility. Perhaps it has also come under the influence of these elements. They are insisting on the retention of these refugees in the State so that they are able to win a decisive stage in tilting the population ratio of the State in favour of the Hindus. The State government has given these refugees some land, which they cultivate and obtain the crops. They have built houses to live in. They are provided with the means of subsistence and educational facilities. However, they do not enjoy the right to vote in assembly elections and no proprietary rights are enjoyed by them. Communal sections have little humanitarian interest in their rehabilitation. They want to use them for their political objectives. That is why a great deal of noise is made from Delhi up to Jammu for granting them the rights like any other state subject.

These measures have brought some change in the conditions in the State. In the census of 1941, the ratio of Muslim population in the State was 77.11 per cent. In 1971 census it fell to 68.8 per cent. Those perpetrating genocide and change of the ratio in population want to make a few more achievements and shape things after their own choosing. The hue and cry, which they raised in Jammu and Kashmir Assembly during the Resettlement Bill, indicates their true intentions and the nefarious designs they pursue.

The population of Kashmiri subjects in Pakistan is small. Business, service and means of sustenance or matrimonial relations bind most of them (to that land). It may not be possible for them to return to the native land. During past 35 years, in all 117 such persons came back to Kashmir. The number of people coming to Kashmir decreases year after year. But the Resettlement Bill is riding the nerves of those who want to see the Kashmiri Muslims in a state of destitution, helplessness and in minority. Their intrigues have been going on for centuries. The mentality does not change although its outer shape and guise do change. The objective is the same although the terminology and idiom may be different.

But the principles of the Kashmiri people based on justice plus their alertness have always defeated these elements. Continued alertness and awakening are not the price for national freedom alone but for national existence also. God forbid, if the poisonous air of communalism succeeds at any time to contaminate the Kashmiris, these communalists should still realize that Kashmiri Muslims have lived and died for their principles despite so many obstacles in the path. In stead of bowing their head infront of the demon of communalism, they have preferred to let their head be severed from the body. Kashmiri Muslims acceded to India out of their sincerity but the Hindu communalism betrayed them and stabbed them with a dagger of conspiracy and breach of trust.

Opinion of other minorities

Although Kashmir is a specific target of aggressive onslaught of Hindu communalists, yet this monster has found conducive environ in the whole of India and is spreading out its fangs. The Christians are liquidated in Mizoram and Nagaland. They are crying but are not treated even as second class citizens. The Hindu extremists have vitiated tolerant states like Kerala with their poisonous mentality. Recently organized Hindu group attacked Christian churches and indulged in killing and arson. The Hindu of higher cast does not treat the Harijans even as animals. A leader like Jagjivan Ram had to say recently that India has not as much threat from outside as from the oppressive and aggressive Brahmans. The Sikh community is suffering immensely at the hands of the communal Hindus. Sardar Devendra Singh Duggal, the head of the research board in the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee has to recount the following shocking story:

By accepting partition of the country in 1947, Hindu leaders betrayed the Sikhs and Muslim Khudai khidmatgars (volunteers). Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Wali Khan are paying the price for trusting Hindu leadership. The Sikhs are looked upon as a class of

criminals. Secularism has been disfigured in India to the extent that (according to the Hindu communalists) the majority community commits no sin and no good is expected from minority. If Pakistan has turned out the minorities by force, we do it by cunning and craft. By calling India 'Mother India (Bharat Mata)', they are denigrating secularism because they look at her in the shape of a goddess. Very few people know that the Hindu communalists changed the Independence Day from 14 August to 15 August because they considered 14 August as an inauspicious day.

Talwainder Singh Duggal has given an account of a meeting of a Sikh leader named Sardar Kapur Singh with Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He writes:

Sardar Kapur Singh had a chance meeting with Mr. Jinnah in a hotel in London. Jinnah Sahib said, "The Sikhs have been lured by the Hindu communalists and they have committed a big mistake. These people will never allow you to come up. Please consider my suggestion with a cool mind otherwise in old age you will repent on what you did (in young age)". Duggal wrote that "Jinnah Sahib's words came true to last word. Most of the Sikhs now take his timely warning as a word from the gab. (*The Indian Express*, Delhi 21 May 1982).

These were the words of a Sikh historian. Even the trusting sections among the Hindus themselves are apprehensive of aggressive postures of Hindu communalists. The famous Hindu writer Niradh Chaudhary writes in his work *The Continent of a Circe* as this:

For centuries, the Hindus have been slaves of slaves. The Sikhs and the Muslims made sacrifices to liberate them. But now they are in an aggressive mood and this is the root cause of communal clashes and tension in India. Its present attitude is quite different from the submissive attitude, which they have been demonstrating for centuries in the past.

The specific target of Hindu communal aggressiveness is Kashmir. The Resettlement Bill is a red rag to this bull. Blood has flowed into the eyes of the bull on beholding the Bill.

They are regrouping their ranks to launch an attack on Kashmir. The masses of people on Kashmir and the Muslims should anticipate the nature and intensity of the danger and, therefore, should bring together all their strength to face it failing which, the following alarming words of Iqbal can take practical shape:

Tumhari dastan tak bhi na hogi dastanun main

(Even your tale will not find place among the myths)

Annexure II US Congressional House Committee Report

*The Kashmir Connection of May 21, 1994 conducted
under the aegis of the Task Force on Terrorism &
Unconventional Warfare of the House Republican Research
Committee of the US House of Representatives*

"As the rivalry between India and Pakistan has intensified, perhaps no other region has taken on the significance of Kashmir. That province is unique among all the crisis points along the Indo-Pakistani border in that it is not just an area of strategic and economic importance, it is also the object of the ideological passions of the various states in the region. Thus, the following paper will briefly summarise the ongoing rivalry in Kashmir, focussing on Pakistan, Iran, the various Islamist movements, and the military/terrorist dimension of the conflict.

For Islamabad, the liberation of Kashmir is a sacred mission, the only task unfulfilled since the days of Pakistan's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah. However, Kashmir is equally important in that it serves the domestic interests of the Pakistani Government in three crucial respects. First, tension over Kashmir creates a diversion from frustrations at home. Second, the Kashmir cause allows Islamabad to rally the support of Pakistan's Islamist parties and their loyalists in the military and the ISI, and third, it serves the regime as an important access point to the markets of Central Asia.

Similarly, Iran considers an escalation of the *jihad* for the liberation of Kashmir a key to the assertion of its own strategic prominence, particularly under the auspices of its Islamic Bloc. Indeed, Iran sees Kashmir, because it is the land of the Ayatollah Khomeini's roots, as sacred ground and is using that fact to instil ideological zeal in the various nationals who make up Teheran's terrorist infrastructure. Not surprisingly, having taken the proverbial tiger by the tail and invested such prestige in the "Islamization" of Kashmir, Teheran now finds itself committed to fighting for it.

Additionally, beyond Iran and Pakistan, the Armed Islamic Movement, as well as several Saudi, Gulf Arab, and other supporters of Islamist causes, put Kashmir high on their list of *jibads* to be fought. This is not only because of Kashmir's aforementioned material and "spiritual" importance, but also because it is seen as a relatively easy target. Being geographically isolated and chocked full of weapons and terrorists cells, many Islamist groups believe that the wresting of Kashmir from India would be a great prize acquired at minimal cost, and would inspire their followers and further the cause.

Whatever the validity of such an assumption, all of the states and organizations engaged in Kashmir, have large, highly trained and well-equipped forces, and most have not yet been committed to the Kashmiri *jihad*. Thus, there exists an environment in which ideological zeal and strategic and political considerations have coalesced. Specifically, as already noted, Pakistan needs Kashmir as a distraction from its domestic problems, various terrorists Afghan groups are chomping at the bit to move, awaiting only a wink and a nod from the ISI, and Iran and various Arab states stand willing to finance the effort.

Consequently, apparently reassured about the steadfastness of its Islamic support, Islamabad has acknowledged openly the futility of its negotiations with India over the Kashmir issue. At the same time, Pakistani

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has begun to accede to demands from her military leaders for further increases in the Pakistani defense budget.

The terrorist dimension

In fact, the rising militancy of Pakistani officials is far from empty rhetoric, for Islamabad has used the increasing tension in Kashmir as a pretext for expanding its terrorist training and support system for operations in Central Asia and elsewhere in the world.

To that end, the ISI has established the *Markaz-i-Dawa*, a center for worldwide Islamist activities. Mulavi Zaki, the Center's spiritual leader, has told the trainees that their destiny is to fight and liberate "the land of Allah from infidels wherever they might be." The commanders and instructors at *Markaz-i-Dawa* are AIM members, primarily *Ikhwan* from Algeria, Sudan and Egypt, and most of them have more than a decade of combat experience in Afghanistan.

In early 1992, some of these Afghans were transferred to Azad Kashmir where the Pakistani Army was building new camps for them. By early 1993, there were over 1,000 Afghan *mujahideen* in the *Markaz-e-Dawa* alone. Following the completion of their advanced training, the Afghans were sent to Kashmir, Algeria and Egypt. Furthermore, Islamabad's claim to the contrary notwithstanding, the main offices of the Islamist terrorist organizations have remained functioning in Peshawar.

In addition to the transfers noted above, a series of "raids" by police since October 1992 resulted in the shifting of some 200 terrorist operatives, including some wanted by Western police officials, the facilities near Jalalabad, just across the Afghan border. Indeed, in the fall of 1993, an Arab Afghan with first hand knowledge of the situation confirmed that Pakistan had "pushed them out of the door only to open a window for them to return and they come and go as they wish in Peshawar."

In the meantime, in the summer of 1993, the ISI had in the *Markaz-e-Dawa* another force of some 200 Afghans — mainly Jalalud-Din Haqqanis people from the Khost area — operating under its direct command and earmarked for special operations in Kashmir. According to Muhammad Fazl al-Hajj, a PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) terrorist captured in southern Kashmir in the summer of 1993, additional Afghans and Afghan nationals were being prepared by the ISI for forthcoming escalation in Kashmir. At least, 400 Afghans and Afghan nationals were known to have been organised in one camp, where they were trained by the ISI to augment and provide a leadership core for the Kashmiri *Hizbul-Mujabideen*. There was also a corresponding expansion of the preparations of Islamist terrorists for operations in forward bases in Kashmir, with some 600 terrorists, about half of them veteran Afghans and Afghans, already at the final phase of their training.

Indeed, many Arab volunteers continue to arrive in Peshawar almost every day. The preferred port of entry is the Karachi airport. There, a special department run by a Major Amir — an ISI Major with Afghan experience “turned” director of Immigration at the airport — oversees the volunteers “proper” entry into Pakistan and quick dispatch to Peshawar. The main *Ikhwan* facility is the *Maktaba-i-Khidmat* (Services Centre), which was originally established by the late Shaykh Abd Allah Azzam and is now run by his successor, Shaykh Muhammad Yussaf Abbas. The *Maktaba-i-Khidmat* still processes volunteers for AIM, but at present many of the volunteers are dispatched to the numerous training camps run by Arab ‘Afghan militants inside Afghanistan. The ISI continues to provide the weapons and expertise necessary to support this operation.

Meanwhile, the government of Afghanistan has also increased its support for terrorist training and preparation. This growing direct involvement is important because the main operating bases for the ISIs activities in Central Asia are in northern Afghanistan. The Origins of this arrangement run

back to the aftermath of the fall of Kabul. At that time, many Arab Afghans returned to Peshawar where they were organized by the Pakistani government to support various Islamist causes in concert with Iran and Sudan. Many of these fighters later returned to Afghanistan as quality forces or to serve in personal guard details.

Subsequently, in early December 1993 during a state visit to Pakistan, the Deputy Prime Minister of Afghanistan, Maulana Arsalan Rahmani, elaborated on Kabul's perception of the Islamist struggles worldwide, and especially in South and Central Asia. He hailed Afghanistan's active support for Islamist armed causes and stressed that "we don't consider this support as intervention in any country's internal affairs." Maulana Aarsalan Rahmani also admitted that Afghanistan was providing military assistance to various insurgencies because:

"we cannot remain aloof from what is happening to the Muslims in occupied Kashmir, Tajikistan, Bosnia, Somalia, Burma, Palestine and elsewhere ... We are not terrorists but Mujahideen fighting for restoring peace and preserving honour."

Rahmani acknowledged that Afghanistan has also played a major role in a recent development among the Islamist organizations fighting in Indian Kashmir, namely, the merger of the *Harakatul-Jihad-e Islami* and *Harakatul-Mujahideen* into the potent *Harakatul-Ansar* group. This support for the unification of the two movements, according to Rahmani, was but part of the active support given by Afghanistan to the Islamist fighters in Kashmir, Tajikistan, and Bosnia. "There are about 8,000 members of *Harakatul Ansar* who are supporting the Kashmiri struggle against Indian occupation," Rahmani stated.

Of Men and Arms

The ISI also provides these and other terrorists with new weapons. For example, in the summer of 1993, the Kashmiri *Mujahideen* were provided with powerful long-range

missiles called "chemical missiles" by the Sikhs who had learned about them while in training in Pakistan. At that time, the Kashmiri and ISI crews were being trained in the use of these missiles in Pakistani Kashmir. In fact, these are *Saqr* missiles which were developed in the 1980s with help from the United States for use by the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan.

Subsequently, there has been a significant expansion in the smuggling of quality weapons from Pakistan into Kashmir and as of late 1993 there has been a corresponding change in the tactics used by terrorists, including the use of hit and run strikes by highly trained and well equipped detachments. Among the new weapons now used in Kashmir are 107mm rockers, 60mm mortars, 40mm automatic grenade launchers (Soviet and Chinese models, a modification of the 57mm helicopter rocket pods with solar-powered timing devices for the delayed firing of rockets, and a LAW-type tube-launched ATMs (Soviet and Chinese models).

In addition, the Kashmiri terrorist have also begun using sophisticated communications systems including small radios (systems with frequency hopping, selective broadcast, digital burst communications etc.) and collapsible solar-panels for reload systems, as well as frequency scanning devices for detecting and homing in on military-type broadcasts. All the communication systems are of NATP/US origin, with some components made in Japan. All of these systems have been used by the *Mujahideen* in Afghanistan, having been provided via the ISI.

On top of all of this, there has been a large increase in the quantities of small arms provided to the Kashmiris, including Type 56 ARs (PRC AK-47s), several types of machineguns, long range sniper rifles, pistols and RPGs, all of Soviet and Chinese manufacture. Also, some of the Kashmiri terrorist have begun receiving highly specialized weapons for assassination projects.

Given this obviously high level of sophistication, it would seem safe to assume that the situation in Kashmir will become

increasingly ominous. As Pakistan and India eye each other with rising suspicion and as other powers come into play, the danger of outright war becomes ever more real. In future reports, the Task Force will examine the full extent of this danger and will explain its ramifications."

Annexure III

Dixon Report and the views of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah

Some time back *The Kashmir Times* and *Muslim India* published a letter written by late Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah to Col. Nasser of Egypt in 1965. The letter provides us an insight into Sheikh's interpretation of Sir Owen Dixon's proposal on a "possible and acceptable solution of Kashmir". That this view appears to be at variance with the actual proposal called as Dixon's Report makes it more intriguing. For the benefit of our readers we reproduce both the documents — Sheikh's letter to Nasser and Dixon's Report to open a debate on the subject. Editor* (Courtesy *Kashmir Sentinel* Sept. 1 – Oct 15, 1998)

Text of the summing up and concluding portion of the report of Sir Owen Dixon, UN Representative for India and Pakistan on Kashmir, submitted to the Security Council in September 1950

It will be seen that two main lines have been pursued in the attempts which have been made to settle the dispute between the two countries about the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The attempt to find a solution by taking a plebiscite over the whole State and so decide by a majority to which country the entire State shall go has its origin in the first proceedings before the Security Council. It would be recalled that by the Resolution of 21 April 1948 the desire of both India and Pakistan that the question of accession of the State

to one of them should be decided by free and impartial plebiscite was noted with satisfaction. In the agreed resolution of the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan January 5, 1949, there is a recital of the acceptance by the Governments of both countries of the principles that the question of the accession of the State to India or Pakistan would be decided through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite.

From the date of this resolution until the present there have been continual efforts to bring about conditions in which the preparations for taking a poll might go forward. No one has supposed that they could even begin while much of the respective territories on either side of the ceasefire line were occupied by opposed armies and their base units. There are in addition many other obstacles to the holding of a free and fair plebiscite which, must be removed before the state would be ready for the organization and machinery which the taking of a poll would make necessary. Unfortunately all this has been made to depend upon the agreement of the parties. It is enough to refer to paragraph 2, 6(a) and 10 of the Resolution of 5 January 1949 and to the provisions of the Resolution of August 13, 1948 upon which these paragraphs hang.

There is, I believe, on the side of India a conception of what ought to be done to ascertain the real will of the people which is not that tacitly assumed by me. Doubtless it is a conception which Pakistan does not share. The resolution of January 1949 contains some rather general provisions in relation to the holding of the plebiscite and the antecedent steps, and about these more general provisions the parties were able to agree. But to apply propositions of this kind a programme of practical acts and physical events must be agreed on. Without that it is impossible for the Plebiscite Administrator to begin the extensive and difficult work of organizing the taking of a poll. It is the practical measures

which have proved the obstacle not the mere general propositions.

Pakistan has complained of India's failure to agree on the practical measures which must precede the preparations for the actual taking of a poll and has maintained that this failure is the result of a deliberate policy. But the fact remains that under the resolutions the agreement of India to the course to be pursued in these matters is a condition — precedent to carrying out a plebiscite of the state, and there is no such agreement. Moreover, the United Nations Commission failed in its efforts to secure an agreement upon them. I failed in mine; neither party put forward any other proposals and both appeared to concur in the view that the possibility of agreement has been exhausted.

The contention of Pakistan that it was incumbent on India to agree did not advance the matter practically. It was in these circumstances that I decided to turn away from a plebiscite of the whole state, an "over all" plebiscite, as a method of solving the problem of Kashmir. Partition of the whole state between the two countries is of course an obvious alternative. But unfortunately the Valley of Kashmir cannot itself be partitioned and, it is an area claimed by each side. Pakistan claims it not only because it is a predominantly Muslim but also because the Jhelum River flows from it and Pakistan will not readily give up her claim. India is just as insistent upon her claim and has the advantage of possession. Some method of allocating the Kashmir valley to one party or the other is therefore essential to my plan of partition.

I am inclined to the view that no method of allocating the Valley to one or other of the contending parties is available except a poll of the inhabitants. By the inhabitants I mean those of them who fulfill whatever maybe fixed as the test of eligibility to vote. The difficulty of using the expedient of a plebiscite appears to be entirely that the plebiscite is held in conditions which make it an effective means of ascertaining

the real will of the people independently formed and freely expressed and, on the other hand certain conceptions or preoccupations of the India government. These are based, in part, on what India conceives to be the origin and course of the fighting in 1947 and 1948 and part on her unwillingness to have any interference to the civil administration. In addition, it may be, as I have suggested that a different conception exists of the process of ascertaining the will of the people. Although I myself found no reconciliation of this conflict possible, it may be that India's help some resolution of the conflict may be discovered. She may come to realize the necessity of practical measures which will really secure the freedom and fairness of a plebiscite must be paramount over these conceptions. At all events I have formed the opinion that if there is any chance of settling the dispute over Kashmir any agreement between India and Pakistan it now lies in partition and in some means of allocating the Valley rather than in an overall plebiscite. The reason for this may be shortly stated.

The State of Jammu and Kashmir is not really a unit geographically, demographically or economically. It is an agglomeration of territories brought under the political power of one Maharaja. That is the unity it possesses. If as a result of an overall plebiscite the state as an entirety passed to India, there would be large movements of Muslims and another refugee problem would arise for Pakistan who would be expected to receive them in a very great numbers. If the result favoured Pakistan a refugee problem, although not of such dimensions, would arise of India, because of the movement of Hindus and Sikhs. Almost all this would be avoided by partition. Great areas of the state are unequivocally Muslim. Other areas are predominantly Hindu. There is a further area which is Buddhist, No one doubts the sentiment of the great majority of the inhabitants of these areas. The interest of the people, the justice as well as the permanence of the settlement, and the imperative necessity

of avoiding another refugee problem all point to the wisdom of adopting partition as the principle of settlement and of abandoning that of an overall plebiscite. But in addition the economic and geographic considerations point in the same direction. The difficulty in partitioning the state is to form a sound judgment where the line should be drawn.

While what I have said deals broadly with the state as a whole, it is by no means easy to fix the limits on each side. That is because it is necessary that the territory allocated to each side should be continuous in itself and should be contiguous with that country, because there are pockets of people whose faith and affiliations are different from those of people by whom they are cut off, because the changes in the distribution of population as the result of the troubles cannot be completely ignored and because geographical features remain important in fixing what may prove an international frontier.

I shall not deal with the matter with more particularity, and I say so much only in case the Security Council should be of opinion that it should take further steps to effect a settlement between the parties. But for myself I doubt whether it may not be better to leave the parties to themselves in negotiating terms for settlement of the problem how to dispose of Jammu and Kashmir between them. So far the attitude of the parties has been to throw the whole responsibility upon the Security Council or its representatives of settling the dispute notwithstanding that except by agreement between them there was no means of settling it.

When actual fighting was going on between it was natural, if not necessary, that the Security Council and the Commission as its delegate should intervene between them and propose terms to stop the hostilities and the question came to be how to settle the rival claims to Kashmir, the initiative was still left with the Security Council and the Commission. The whole question has now been thoroughly discussed by the parties with the Security Council, the

Commission and myself and the possible methods of settlement have been exhaustively investigated. It is perhaps best that the initiative should now pass back to the parties. At all events I am not myself prepared to recommend any further course of action on the part of the Security Council for the purpose of assisting the parties to settle between them how the state of Jammu and Kashmir is to be disposed of.

The continued maintenance of two armies facing one another across a ceasefire line is another matter. A danger to peace must exist while this state of things continues. Except for mutual distrust and fear, one of another, there is no reason why the two countries should go on maintaining armies separated only by the ceasefire line. It is a boundary which might be kept by check posts and the like in the same way as any frontier between countries at peace. It is hard to believe that the Indian and Pakistan chiefs of staff would have any difficulty in arranging for a concurrent reduction of forces or in effecting the necessary changes in the manner in which the ceasefire line is held, if they were instructed by their respective governments to meet for the purpose.

Before leaving the subcontinent I addressed to the Prime Minister severally a request that this should be done. It is a matter in which the Security Council is directly concerned because it involves a proximate danger to peace.

I recommended that the Security Council should press the parties to reduce the military strength holding the ceasefire to the normal protection of a peace-time frontier.

In the meantime it is my recommendation that the party of United Nations Military Observers be retained on the ceasefire line. They cannot continue there indefinitely but after a time the question of their withdrawal might be settled in consultation with the two governments.

Sheikh Abdullahs letter to Col. Nasser of Egypt

"The dispute between India and Pakistan with regard to the future of the state of Jammu and Kashmir has strained the

relations of the two countries for the last 17 years and now and again has been leading to (such) an aggravating situation that at any time its continued tension may burst into a shooting war leading to the devastating consequences in that region of the world. Moreover this situation has saddled both the countries with huge military expenses which has crippled both economically. Yet another tragic aspect of this situation is the continued agony for the 5 million people of the state whose economy and well-being is completely paralyzed due to the resultant uncertainty and insecurity.

The urgency and importance of an early settlement of this dispute cannot therefore be over-emphasized. Many statesmen and friendly countries have during the past 17 years made a number of proposals, suggesting a peaceful settlement of the dispute. No doubt the best and most democratic solution could be through a plebiscite, to which not only both the countries but also the UNO is committed. Should however, holding of a plebiscite not be feasible, there are other practicable solutions, suggested in the past. One such solution was made by Sir Owen Dixon, the UN Representative appointed to negotiate a settlement between India and Pakistan. Broadly speaking Sir Owen Dixon proposed that"

- a) The Southern parts of the State comprising Kathua, Jammu and parts of Udhampur districts (now being predominantly Hindu areas) may be annexed with India.
- b) The areas, now known as Azad Kashmir and Gilgit and Baltistan being exclusively Muslim be annexed with Pakistan.
- c) The Valley of Kashmir along with the adjoining areas across Bannihal (i.e. the district of Doda and the Niabat of Arnas, Gulab Garh) to be allowed to decide its future through a plebiscite. Leñ is to follow the result of plebiscite, held in this territory (Kargil being exclusively Muslim in population to go with the Valley)

Sir Owen Dixon took a detached view of things and considered this as the best practicable solution under the circumstances. It appears to be a fair method of resolving the present tangle. In order to avoid a number of complications that might arise by holding a plebiscite immediately in the territory referred to in clause c above, a reasonable way can be found in keeping the said territory under UN Trusteeship for a specified period (i.e. 5 to 10 years). The people of the territory can be given an opportunity for the exercise of the right of self-determination in a suitable way, after that period. In the interim period, it is hoped that tempers will cool down and much of the emotional factor, now surcharging the situation will die out. Further, the interim period can be utilized for the development of these areas towards which the two counties as well as the UNO will suitably contribute.

The above proposal can be a very good basis for discussion between India and Pakistan and Kashmir. It is hoped that friendly countries, interested in a settlement, will take up this proposal for extensive lobbying at the diplomatic levels, as well as the international conferences.

Needless to say that an earnest effort in this direction will be the greatest service to the cause of peace in the world."

(The two documents are reproduced with courtesy from *Kashmir Sentinel* of Sept. 1-Oct. 15, 1998)

Annexure IV

Resolution of CPI 29 July 1953

1953 is a watershed in the contemporary history of Kashmir. Dismissal of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah as the Prime Minister of the first interim government of J&K was the first adequate Indian response to the Anglo-American conspiracy brewing in Kashmir. Without doubt leading communists of the time Dr. Z.A. Ahmad and Dr. K.M. Asbraf played a leading part for the removal of Sheikh Abdullah. This was despite CPIs liberal flirtation with religious sub — nationalism — a la Adhikari thesis. This document — a resolution adopted in the Central Committee of CPI in Delhi on 23-29 July 1953 even while supporting Sheikh's dismissal amply reflects that CPIs hangover with religious nationalism continued to prevail. (Courtesy Kashmir Sentinel Dec. 1-15, 1998)

Text of the summing up and concluding portion of the report of Sir Owen Dixon, UN Representative for India and Pakistan on Kashmir, submitted to the Security Council in September 1950

Text of the Resolution

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of India views with grave concern the reports coming from Kashmir that some leading personalities of the Sheikh Abdullah group and its supporters in the National Conference have made public declaration that the state of Kashmir should be an independent or India and that its

new status be guaranteed by India, Pakistan and the United Nations.

It is also stated that the areas of Jammu and Ladakh should be allowed to be fully incorporated in the Indian Union.

It is clear that these declarations mean that problem of Kashmir is entering a new and very serious phase of its crisis, as serious as when Kashmir was made an object of invasion five years ago.

These declarations first mean that the Kashmir valley separates itself from even the limited but vital ties it has with India which are expressed in the act of limited accession of Kashmir and Jammu to India and the further mutual aid visualized in the Delhi Agreement.

Secondly, it means that Kashmir undergoes a new partition in which the vicious principle that predominantly Muslim and Hindu areas cannot and should not remain together is implicitly admitted.

Such a partition will again encourage those forces of communal reaction and their imperialist inspirers as have so long imposed innumerable atrocities and so much harm on the people of India and Pakistan, Jammu and Kashmir.

The fine traditions of the Kashmir people, who have been immune from the virus, are thus sought to be destroyed to the mutual loss of the people of both India and Kashmir where Hindu-Muslim amity will be put to a new strain.

The third and the most disastrous outcome of the line is the proposal that the United Nations should guarantee this new independent State of Kashmir from any aggression.

Any one knowing the character of the United Nations as it is today and the way it is dominated by the Anglo-American imperialist block, which has been mainly responsible for fomenting dissension between India and Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir, will see that guarantee by the UNO means importing American military forces into Kashmir, and, in course of time, its incorporation in Pakistan areas which are being made the basis of by war mongering plans of America.

Thus the alluring slogan of independent Kashmir becomes reactionary slogan that will hand over Kashmir to the imperialist warmongers, allowing their forces to occupy the strategic valley of Kashmir and threaten the peace of all its neighbouring states, including that of India. The Central Committee, therefore, calls upon all democratic forces of India and the State of Jammu and Kashmir to prevent this new disaster overtaking our people.

But in order to find the path to prevent this disaster, it is necessary to know how it has come to pass that these leaders, who not long ago were adhering to a non-communal and democratic stand point have now taken to such a line against the interests of the people? What has led them to this path?

The people of Kashmir and Jammu are in the grip of the same economic crisis that has overtaken the economy of India and its people, the same crisis that is affecting all the capitalist countries under-developed countries of Asia and Africa.

The millions of peasants, artisans, middle class people, traders, etc. are suffering from low income, high prices, poverty and unemployment and with no near prospect of any way out of the crisis.

The people of Kashmir beat the raiders back with the help of the India Arm; they fought for a land law that was expected to rid them of the burdens of landlordism; they removed the old Maharaja and had their own constituent assembly with power to make their own constitution. But all that has not been sufficient to resolve the problems of life of the people.

The Government of Sheikh Abdullah and the Government of India have both failed to stall the main problems of the peoples living, of land, work and trade.

The agents of American imperialists in the guise of the United Nations observers and landlord reactionaries have taken advantage of the dissatisfaction of the people to put forward the idea that a separation from India and independent existence will enable them to solve their problems with the alluring promises of loans and aids from the UNO and the Americans to develop an independent Kashmir State.

An independent Kashmir can also open the trade whose natural routes lie through Pakistan, but are now blocked because of Kashmirs accession to India.

With some plausibility these forces argue that if the Indian government can follow the path of taking loans from the Americans to tide over its difficulties, why not an independent Kashmir should be able to do it.

The leaders of the Sheikh Abdullah group, who have held the reins of government so far, now want to pursue this line in order to hide their failures and divert the attention of the masses from these failures and their real reasons.

The reactionaries fail point out the fate of South Korea that

was occupied and devastated by the UNO-Americans, the fate of the nearest neighbour state of Afghanistan, whose economy has been looted by the Americans and the fate of even India which because of it being tied up with sterling and dollar capital, is unable to take its independent road to progress.

In order to serve its own narrow interests, this group is utilizing the ignorance of the masses, their discontent with the existing government, to side track them into the worst disaster that would follow Kashmirs separation from India and its lineup with the UNO or Pakistan.

The government of Sheikh Abdullah failed because it did not fully implement the land laws that were intended to rid the peasant of burdens of landlordism. It obstructed and suppressed the peasant forces that were implementing the laws with their own action. It allowed unreasonable levies on the peasant producers, and allowed speculators and landlords to get hold of them in the name of feeding the towns.

It failed to prevent corruption in its own apparatus, which in the early stages of the incoming of the new state, had the advantage of being run by the leadership of the National Conference and was not made of hardened bureaucrats.

But when these new rulers themselves began to be transformed into the image of the old rulers, the Sheikh Abdullah government did not allow the democratic masses to bring up their independent mass organization and forces to correct the newly rising reactionaries.

Ita now wants to hide its failures by divisionary slogan of independence to mislead the people.

The reactionaries in the government circles in India have also helped in the development by insisting of full accession, on retaining the Maharaja and the privy purse and by trying to grab the economy of Kashmir in the interest of the big monopolist of India and by refusing to help the new state with grater financial aid unless their terms of full financial integration were accepted.

Moreover, the failure of the Sheikh Abdullah group to satisfy the just demands of the Jammu people in the matter of their language, service-employment and administrative autonomy with separation from Kashmir, enabled the landlord reactionaries to see the discontent of the people, and the help which certain reactionary Hindu circles rendered them has enabled some leaders of the sheikh group to easily sown the idea in the minds of the Kashmiri people of a fresh partition and separation from India.

Under such circumstances the democratic forces in Kashmir and Jammu must come forward to save the people from these new designs of the imperialist votaries.

The democratic forces must refuse to separate Kashmir from India as such separation will not mean independence for the people but enslavement and further impoverishment.

The status that Kashmir has today by the act of limited accession, and even the terms of the Delhi Agreement, is such that thereby its people not only unite in friendship with India, but they also stand to gain from the vast strength of the economy of India, which is capable of helping Kashmir to grow prosperous provided the democratic forces on either side were able to make the governments follow democratic policies.

By limited accession, Kashmir retains its right to frame her own constitution, its own fundamental rights, its own laws to abolish landlordism without compensation, its right to remove the Maharaja and the privy purse and the right to be independent of the interferences of the President of the Indian Republic.

The democratic forces both in Kashmir and India must struggle to let Kashmir retain this status of virtual independence within the framework of the Indian Union to which it accedes in the very sense of limited accession.

The existence of the Indian army must not mean and does not mean the occupation of Kashmir by an alien hostile conquering force interfering in the life of the people.

The India army only defends Kashmir against foreign invasion, which tasks given to it by the free consent of the Kashmiri people. The Indian army must behave as a friend for defence and not as a police force against the people, interfering in the internal affairs of the country.

The democratic forces on either side must see that the Delhi Agreement renders adequate financial aid for solving the crisis in the life of the people and is not used as a weapon to draw Kashmir within the vicious grip of the monopoly financiers of India.

They must resist full financial integration of the two states, as under present conditions the powerful finance circles of India and their budgetary maneuvers will ruin the weak economy of Kashmir and sow further seeds of suspicion and discontent.

Mutual benefit and development of peoples interests must be the key to all agreements and their implementation.

While today Kashmir with its limited accession has all the advantages of independence and autonomy, without being a prey to foreign intervention, the new slogan of separation and partition would land Kashmir in the hands of imperialist warmongers and worst looters of its people.

The democratic forces on either side must see that the peasants of Kashmir are helped to rid themselves of the burden of landlordism. We must see that friendly agreements between India and Pakistan are made to help open trade to the benefit of all and that a prosperous peasant and honest trader helps the artisan to get upon his feet again.

The democratic forces must campaign for the rights of the Jammu and Ladakh people, in the matter of language, services, local administrative and financial autonomy and civil liberties.

Only when democratic forces inside and outside the National Conference and the constituent assembly of Kashmir, basing themselves on the Kisan Sabhas and other organizations of the people, build a powerful democratic forum and with the aid of their brethren in India develop a powerful movement and organization to solve the problem of land, rent, taxes, civil liberties and the development of Kashmirs economy and succeed in thwarting the forces of imperialist intervention, will the State of Kashmir and Jammu progress on the road to prosperity and independence. (Courtesy *Kashmir Sentinel* Dec. 1-15, 1998).

Annexure V

Democratic National Conference: Genesis

Soon after the launching of Democratic National Conference the correspondent of Mumbai based Janata, Mr. Balraj Puri interviewed Ghulam Muhammad Sadiq, President DNC. It was published in its issue dated April 6, 1958. We reproduce the interview below: (Courtesy Kashmir Sentinel, December 2007)

Q: What precisely are your differences with Bakhshi Sahib and his party?

A: Our differences with Bakhshi have a long history. These differences arose while we were working together. We were acutely conscious of some grave defects in the functioning of the National Conference Organization and the administration. These defects grew to a proportion where they threatened to undermine political stability in the State. But the dominant group inside the National Conference led by Bakhshi Sahib took up a position of obstinate defence of all the weaknesses and defects in the organization and the administration. A group of people dominating the ruling party is utilising state power to establish its monopolistic control over the economic and political life of the State to the detriment of the common people. In pursuit of this aim, this group is resorting to blatantly undemocratic practices of usurping the civil liberties and lawful rights of the people.

This contradiction between the interests of a particular group and the aspirations of the common people developed inside the National Conference particularly during the course of the last two years. The dominant group acted in violation of all the agreed decisions and policies and subordinated the interests of the National Movement to its own narrow and selfish interests. Although it swears by the Constitution, yet in actual practice it is using its authority to mutilate it. All our persistent and sustained efforts to resolve the contradiction failed due to the refusal of Bakhshi Sahib and his group to give up authoritarian ethos and reform themselves. They failed to give a clean, honest and efficient administration to the people. This led to the emergence of our party as a democratic opposition wedded to the objectives of our National movement.

Q: Are these differences also of an ideological nature?

A: Our differences with Bakhshi Sahib assume an ideological nature in so far as he acts in defence of the interests of a particular exploiting class that is thriving on official patronage

Q: If some of your objections to the functioning of the ruling party are met, will you consider the question of rejoining it? Or you will still try to fill the role of a democratic secular opposition?

A: The functioning of a democratic secular opposition is the only guarantee for the growth of a healthy democratic atmosphere in the state. The "emergency" atmosphere prevailing within the State for the last ten years has considerably stunted the growth of democracy here. While any improvement in the functioning of the ruling party is welcome, there is no question of our rejoining it. We shall continue to fulfill our role as a democratic opposition.

Q: Have you any differences with the home and foreign policies of the Government of India? Are you fully satisfied with its Kashmir policy?

A: We are in general agreement with the foreign policy of

the Government of India. In the sphere of home policy, while we appreciate the aim of economic development and construction, we can have our differences over methods and detail. For example, we would like the Government of India to introduce radical agrarian reforms on approximately the same lines as we have done in our State. Broadly speaking, we are satisfied with the Kashmir policy of the government of India except where it has failed to pay sufficient attention to internal affairs of the State with a view to improving matters and eliminating factors that impede the growth of a normal democratic life.

Q: Is it true that one of your senior members, Shri G. L. Dogra said in an interview that ideologically he had always been a Congressman and proposes to remain one.

A: I am not aware of any such interview. However, if Shri G.L. Dogra has given expression to these views he is free to profess his ideology as a Congressman and will continue to have a place of honour in our organization.

Q: If an offer is made by the All India Congress Committee to accept the Democratic National Conference as one of its regular branches, are you likely to accept it?

A: This is a hypothetical question. Anyway, if such an offer is made, it shall receive the most serious consideration of our party.

Q: Can a committee become a member of the DNC and are they being admitted into it? Has any person enrolled himself as a member of your party who, to your knowledge, claims to be a socialist, a Gandhite or a humanist? If so, will you furnish such names?

A: No such question has arisen so far. But, a communist who subscribes to our policies and programmes can enroll himself as a member of our party and work for it. There are many members in our party, some in leading position, who claim to be socialists, Gandhites or humanists. A list of names will be too long to be included in this interview, but if you like I could send some of the names separately.

Q: Can you please describe the ideology of your party in just a general manner, preferably if possible in terms of existing "isms" anyhow far and in what respects does that differ from that of main political parties of India?

A: The broad ideology of our party is socialist. The programme of New Kashmir itself is a socialist programme and in the Constitution of the State recently some of us were in the government. Unfortunately, this did not find favour with Bakhshi Sahib and in stead gave rise to unfounded suspicions.

Q: Is there any truth in the allegation that yours is a sponsored opposition — sponsored by the Government of India to deal Sheikh Abdullah administratively as well as politically?

A: This is a slanderous allegation. The formation of the Democratic National Conference Party is an entire local phenomenon. After the adoption of our Constitution which has the States accession with India as its corner stone, and which embodies the basic principles and objectives of our national movement, the growth of a democratic opposition pledged to the defence of the Constitution was a historical necessity. This reminds one of the origin and role of PSP itself. We shall, however, welcome all the steps taken by the Government of India with a view to promoting a healthy democratic atmosphere in the State. But we shall, at the same time, criticize it where it fails to intervene to check the undemocratic practices of the ruling party. As a party of the Republic of India, the State deserves the attention of the Centre particularly because of the special conditions obtaining here and the personal defects of the leadership of the party in power. (Courtesy *Kashmir Sentinel*, December 2007)

Annexure VI

Right of Self-Determination: Application to JK

... 8. Before British suzerainty over the Princely States terminated in 1947, the inhabitants of these territories had no right of internal self-determination in relation to their prices, and it is extremely doubtful whether, under the law as it existed at that time, they had a right of external self-determination in relation to the U.K., for the reason explained. When, on 15 August, the rulers were freed of British suzerainty, nothing in international law prohibited them from choosing to unite with the newly independent India or Pakistan, even without consulting the wishes of their subjects. Some 560 rulers exercised their option without their legal right to do so being questioned, either at the time or later. On 26 October the Maharaja of JK opted to join India. The Report makes much of the fact that the Governor-General of (independent) India, Lord Mountbatten, expressed the wish on 27 October that the wishes of the inhabitants be consulted after the invasion of JK had been terminated and law and order restored. There are reasons to doubt whether Lord Mountbatten intended, or had the legal power, to impose conditions on accession; but even if he did and had, (a) this would not bind India under international law, and (b) the invasion he preferred to has still not been terminated. In short, under international law as it stood at the time the accession was valid; and the inhabitants of JK had a right to be consulted accordingly, for them to have such a right now, as the Report claims, they would have had to have

to be consulted accordingly, for them to have such a right now, as the Report claims, they would have had to have

to be consulted accordingly, for them to have such a right now, as the Report claims, they would have had to have

acquired it subsequently. I have shown that subsequent development in international law did not confer a right of secession on a non-colonial people such as the inhabitants of the Indian State of JK. The one possible exception is *carence de souverainete*; but the Report rightly admits that this is controversial and in any case concedes that, even on the basis of its own allegations of braches of human rights in the State, a level of oppression justifying secession has not been reached. Accordingly, the only remaining possible source of a right of external self-determination is certain Security Council resolutions calling for a plebiscite, by which the Report sets great store. However, these resolutions were passed under Chapter VI, not VII, of the Charter and were, therefore, not binding on the parities. India and Pakistan both rejected Res. 47 (1948), and India Res. 51 (1951). Admittedly, they both accepted certain resolutions of the UN Commission for India and Pakistan, which envisaged a plebiscite. However, this was expressly conditional on other stipulations being met, including the withdrawal of Pakistani troops and irregular forces. They were never met. In any case, acceptance of a plebiscite as a means of resolving a political and military conflict between two states does not amount to an acknowledgement that the people of the territory have a legal right to one. In the end, the Security Council and UNCIP reached impasse, and in the Simla Agreement of 1972 the two Governments seem to have taken the matter out of the hands of the UN. I agree with the Report that an agreement between the two states "could not have deprived the people of JK of any rights of self-determination to which they were entitled at the time of the Agreement" but since, for the reasons given, they did not have any such right at that time, the argument is of no avail.

9. The Report goes on to consider whether the inhabitants of JK subsequently lost their supposed right through its exercise or abandonment. Admittedly, there has been no plebiscite or referendum; but this has not always been required in cases of self-determination. The Report therefore

considers whether, on the facts, the election of a Constituent Assembly and its adoption of a Constitution confirming that JK is par of India, and/or subsequent elections, amounted to a sufficient popular endorsement. It denies this partly on the grounds that, allegedly, certain elections were "rigged". But even, the Report seems to admit that the election of 1977 was reasonably fair, and this resulted in a clear victory for Sheikh Abdullah. He was an extremely popular figure who had, only two years before, signed the Kashmir Accord reaffirming the place of JK as a constituent unit of India. The authors also draw an analogy with a presumption against the extinction of States. This is ill conceived. But since for the reasons I have given, the populace of JK did not in 1947 have a right in international law to decide whether or not to become part of India, and since they did not subsequently acquire one, it is unnecessary to consider this issue further, since the authors have based themselves on a false premise.

For similar reasons, the discussion of how the right should be exercised is strictly irrelevant. However, mention should perhaps be made of some remarkable and unjustified assumptions, conclusions and recommendations. If (contrary to my view) the people of JK have a right of external self-determination, this must be the whole people, i.e. the inhabitants of the whole of the territory formerly under the Maharajas sovereignty. This seems to be conceded; yet the Report goes on to focus almost exclusively on the part under Indian control, to the exclusion of that under Pakistani control. Almost the only observation regarding the latter in this context relates to Pakistani support for militants. The authors then compound this error with another. They go on to recommend that "The State of JK exercises the right of self-determination separately", the reason proffered being ethnic and religious diversity. The fact that, in the Missions view, not all units may wish to become independent or join Pakistan is not to the point; according to its reasoning they must have a right to do so. But in fact, there is no warrant in law for this type of fragmentation of the "people", and as noted above,

the international community and international law have firmly set their face against the "Bosnianization" that this might entail. In a Report purporting to expound the law, the policy preferences of the authors should perhaps have been left out; but even as a matter of legal policy these recommendations are questionable. (a) If implemented, they could (as is recognized) endanger international peace and security. (b) They could (the authors protestations, notwithstanding) create a precedent for demands to break up India and other multi-ethnic, multi-denominational states, with potentially disastrous consequences not only existing structures but also for fragile inter-communal peace. (c) Breaking up JK might, in the view of the members of the Mission help solve some political and human rights problems there; but it is likely to create others. For within each fragment defined on ethnic or religious grounds, there may well be minorities whose aspirations may not be satisfied, and whose own human rights could be seriously endangered. (d) Using religion as the sole, or a major, criterion for defining a political unit is not self-evidently desirable. It is not necessarily a persons only or most important affiliation, and there are potential human right problems here, too. Furthermore, hatred of the other groups, identified on the basis of their religion, has been one of the main causes of horrible bloodshed in the sub-continent and elsewhere. Accordingly, to single out religion as the basis of a polity is not necessarily a progressive step. These are dangers to which a Mission sent by the International Commission of Jurists, of all bodies, might perhaps have been more sensitive, even apart from its very questionable legal reasoning.

Professor Maurice Mendelson, QC
2 Hare Court Temple
London ECAY7BH
2 February 1995

Annexure VII

The Labyrinth of Kashmir Insurgency

by K.N. Pandit

"Please don't let me go back to India. Keep me anywhere you like in your Northern Areas or locate me in Sinkiang and let me call upon the Kashmiris from there to give you their full support," said Sheikh Abdullah to Ayub Awan, Pakistan's Director of Intelligence Bureau in Mecca in 1965. The source of this piece of information is a Pakistani journalist, Altaf Gowhar who wrote on 'Operation Gibraltar' in *The Nation* of 19 September and 3 October 1999.

The Sheikh had told Awan, "If I call upon them (the Kashmiris) to rise in support of the plan, their response could be overwhelming." To Awan's surprise, Ayub Khan showed no interests in what the Sheikh had conveyed. Z.A. Bhutto was opposed to accepting the Sheikh's help because in the words of Altaf Gowhar, "if the plan (Operation Gibraltar) succeeded, all the credit would go to Sheikh Abdullah". Bhutto didn't like that.

Pakistani military machine took the low key operation of Indian troops in Rann of Kutch in 1965 as a sign of government's lack of determination. The Pak GHQ, emboldened by Nehru's death and goaded into hawkish stance by Z.A. Bhutto – Aziz Ahmad (foreign secretary) combine, put before Ayub Khan the sand table of 'Operation Gibraltar' of General Akhtar Malik, GOC-in-C, 12 Division. Putting his finger on Akhnoor, Ayub Khan said, "Why don't you go for the jugular?" Neither the Corps Commanders nor

the Air and Naval Chiefs were kept in know of the plan. In Mecca, where he had made a detour round London in 1965, the Sheikh gave a surprise to his scheduled visitor Ayub Awan about his knowledge of Pakistan's 'Operation Gibraltar.'

The Sheikh conveyed to Awan that if the 'Operation Gibraltar' was based on the assumption that the people in the valley would welcome Pakistani soldiers, it was utterly false. "If I call upon them to rise in support of the plan their response could be overwhelming," he added.

The Hazratbal holy relic conspiracy preceded 'Operation Gibraltar' by some months. Why was it unfolded prematurely and not simultaneously with that plan remains shrouded in mystery. When late G.Q. Ganderbali, DIG, Kashmir indicted a top business magnate and social patriarch of Srinagar, who enjoyed closest connections with the highest rung of Kashmir political leadership, and was about to unravel the entire conspiracy, he was removed from his post. The other accomplice in the conspiracy is now virtually the most powerful figure in leading regional political party. The conspiracy had two objectives; to destabilize Bakhshi Ghulam Muhammad's government, and to sensitize people to anti-India mood on the basis of religion. Perhaps that was the beginning of theocratisation of Kashmiri society. It was late Maulana Masu'di, the truest well-wisher of Kashmiris who tried to stem the tide. This explains why he was gunned down by the militants at the ripe age of 90.

The holy relic episode took place soon after the failure of Swarn Singh — Bhutto talks in 1963. It indicated that the Plebiscite Front would be activated and alternatives would be explored for separation of Kashmir from India.

When the Sheikh was set free during Sadiq's government, he became a frequent visitor to one of the two elite pro-Pakistani Shi'a families in the locality of Maisuma, Srinagar. Knowledgeable persons said that close contacts of this family

with the Pak intelligence sources served the catalyst for the Sheikh to become privy to the Pakistani plan of 'Operation Gibraltar'. Obviously the channel must have been the Pakistani military intelligence. This surmise is borne out by the fact that the unnamed Maisuma resource person had drawn a comprehensive plan of Srinagar contacts for use once 'Operation Gibraltar' attained the desired goal.

It would be interesting to go a couple of years earlier to the 'Operation Gibraltar'. In 1963, an organization by the name of Youth League was floated. Its members and activists had decided to wage an armed struggle against Indian presence in Kashmir. In 1965, their plan (of course having been drawn in connivance with the Pakistani intelligence agency) was to attack the Indian army from the rear once it got entangled in an armed conflict with Pakistani infiltrators. Of the three more mercurial leaders of Youth League, one was later on inducted as MLA, the second was given a plum government post and the third continues with his secessionist ideology today. At this time Maulavi Iftikhar Ansari, the Shi'a leader, also emerged on the scene with close connections with the Muslim Conference.

Looking back into the individual roles of the leadership in Kashmir, during the 'Operation Gibraltar', we find that two outstanding persons, namely late Maulana Mas'udi and late Mohiu'd-Din Qara worked to foil the entire game plan of Pakistan.

On learning of Nehru's demise in May 1964, the Sheikh cut short his visit to Pakistan and PoK and returned post-haste to New Delhi. Later that year, he went to Algiers where he met Ahmad ben Bella, the renowned Algerian freedom fighter and President. It was in Algiers that the Sheikh met with the Chinese Premier Chou En Lai. Undoubtedly this was an arranged meeting. What transpired between them is not known but at least it came in the papers that Ahmad Ben Bella had asked the Sheikh about the physical sacrifices

made for the "liberation of Kashmir" and took him on a round of the graveyard where nearly 60 of his close relatives lay buried. This indicated that the subject matter was "liberation of Kashmir" from Indian control" and of "sacrifices".

From Algiers, the Sheikh dashed to the Mecca under the rubric of performing the *umra*. Here he met with Awan Ayub, the Pakistan super sleuth in a pre-arranged meeting to talk further on the subject of 'Operation Gibraltar' and his own role in it.

The failure of Pakistani infiltrators to make any substantial gains under 'Operation Gibraltar' in Kashmir turned a damp squib for the pro-Pak chapters whether in political arena or in the field of operation. In 1967, Afzal Baig launched Al-Fath operation in Kashmir on behalf of Plebiscite Front. The defence counsel in the case of the detainees of Al-Fath insurgency was the then General Secretary of National Conference.

The humiliating defeat of Pakistan in 1971 leading to her fragmentation came as a rude shock to the Sheikh and those who towed his line. He ruminated deeply on how he had voluntarily struck at his own credibility. There was now no way out but to seek rapprochement with the Government of India. He had to succumb to the terms of Indira – Sheikh Accord of 1974 which catapulted him once again into the seat of power. Mir Qasim never forgave Indira Gandhi for what proved to be a disastrous turn in contemporary Kashmir history. (Courtesy *Daily Excelsior*)

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Raipur, Bantalaab
Jammu.

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chessboard of Kashmir politics, one finds in these cues quite substantial fund to draw inferences from. It opens our eyes and imagination, not wild but specific, to speculate what shape things are likely to take in that tormented region. When principles are abandoned and cherished slogans reversed, when facts are subverted and fiction is boosted, then virtually people are set eyeball to eyeball with impending failure of the state. And the sadist axiom that by and large people get the government they deserve comes true.

The Author. Hailing from a poor peasant family of rural South Kashmir, Reshi Dev evinced keen interest in Kashmir politics and society from very early age. He is now in the ninety-fifth year of his life, and has summed up in this diary his experiences with almost all major political parties of J&K for last seven decades. His long inning at state politics has brought him only a big disappointment that makes him somewhat sceptic about the future if things do not change in right direction.

Translator. Kashinath Pandit, the former Director of the Centre of Central Asian Studies, Kashmir University has made the subject matter much more readable by adding introduction, notes and appendices to the English version of Reshi Dev's Urdu work *Zakhmun ki Zabani*.

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